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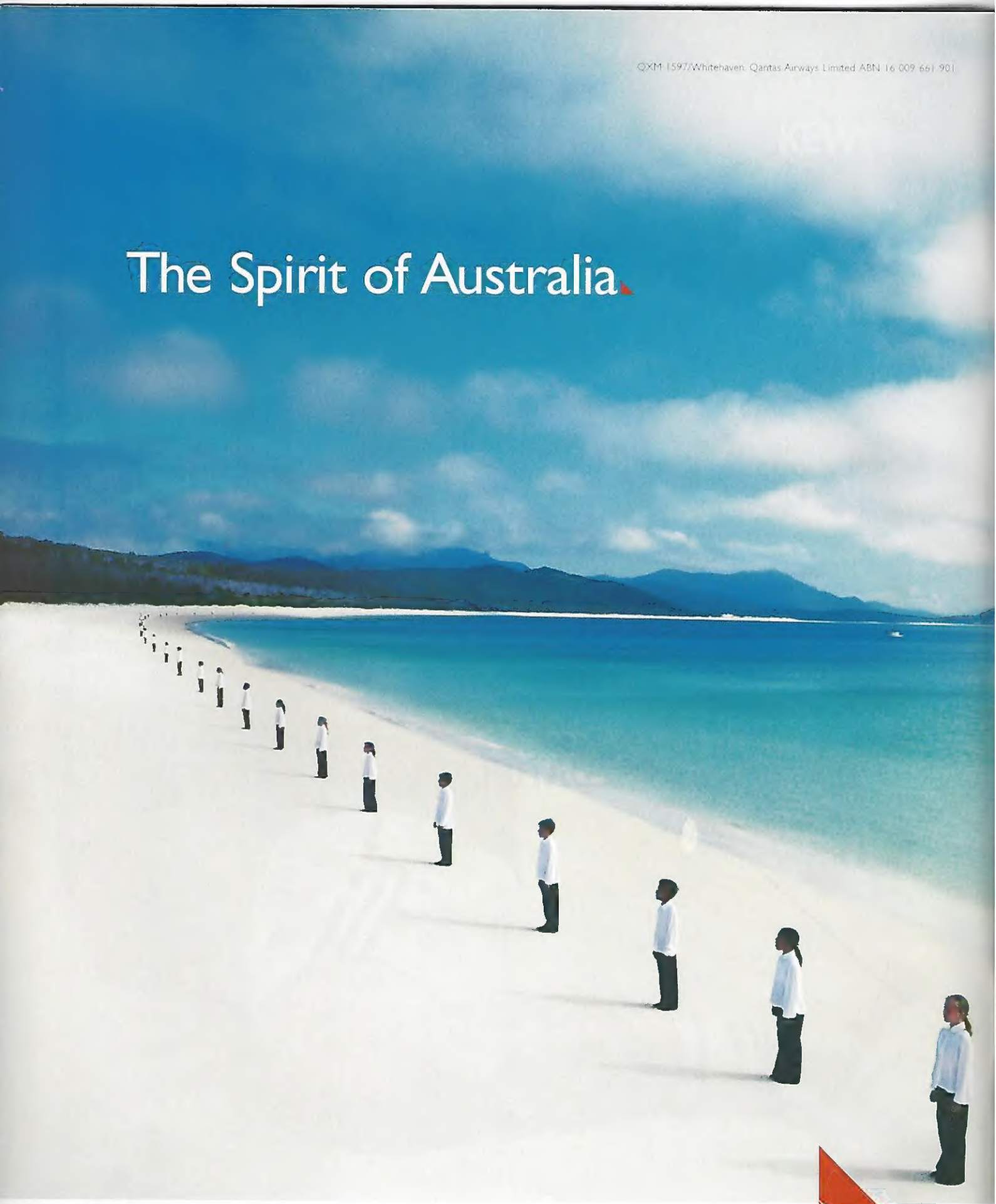

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PREMIER'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 2001 France v Australia match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

This event will showcase international soccer at its very best with the Australian national team, the Socceroos, taking on the current World, European and Confederations Cup champions, France.

In a re-match of their recent Confederations Cup match, the French team will be eager to avenge its defeat, while the Australian team will be keen to maintain its winning form in the lead-up to the final stage of qualifying for the 2002 World Cup

The depth and ability of both teams will ensure that the match will be a wonderful spectacle, as the skills of the world game are put on display at the home of Australian sport, the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

For interstate and international fans, your visit to Melbourne will enable you to experience cultural diversity, excellent shopping and a variety of sport and entertainment precincts. Within a short drive, you can experience all that regional Victoria has to offer, including the Ballarat goldfields, magnificent mountain ranges, the Great Ocean Road and Yarra Valley wineries and restaurants.

I wish all visitors, residents and competing teams an enjoyable and memorable event, and look forward to welcoming you back for the World Cup Qualifier at the MCG, and for many other outstanding Victorian events.

Steve Bracks.

Steve Bracks
Premier of the State of Victoria

SOCCER AUSTRALIA

On behalf of the Board of Soccer Australia, it is my pleasure to welcome all football supporters to the Melbourne Cricket Ground for this international friendly between the Socceroos and World, Confederation and European champions France.

We are greatly honoured to be hosting our European opponents, "Les Bleus", as they prepare to defend their world crown, while our own beloved Socceroos strive to make their second World Cup finals tournament, and first appearance in 28 years.

As we prepare to face the final hurdle in our World Cup qualifying path for Korea and Japan in 2002, the Les Bleus represent a significant test in the strength of our Socceroos.

We have played France twice at senior level, with the honours being shared by both sides and the Socceroos enjoying success most recently with a 1-0 victory at the FIFA Confederations Cup in June this year.

To our guests, the French Football Federation, I thank you for accepting the invitation to play the Socceroos and we look forward to a return match in France at some point in the future.

Finally, I would to like express our appreciation to all our corporate partners who support the Socceroos, and thank you for your continued support of the code in Australia.

On behalf of everyone at Soccer Australia, I wish both teams all the best for this game and urge all fans to get behind the Socceroos.

Ian Knop
Chairman — Soccer Australia

FRENCH FEDERATION

This is a great opportunity for our team to play in Australia, despite concerns that have been expressed, primarily regarding the length of travel and possible withdrawal from the match.

It is important for the France national team, having automatically qualified for the World Cup Finals, to meet up as a team away from the players' individual bases.

This is a fantastic opportunity to play in Australia, and the chance to play a different style of football in another continent is also a great experience for my team.

We knew little about the team that beat us at the Confederations Cup tournament, and we have set ourselves to come out to beat you in a friendly match.

Our team will include players that participated in the world and European championships, but we know that on Australian soil it will be a competitive match.

Australia vs France in Melbourne is a match that I consider a good lead-up to the World Cup.

Roger Lemerre
Coach — French national team

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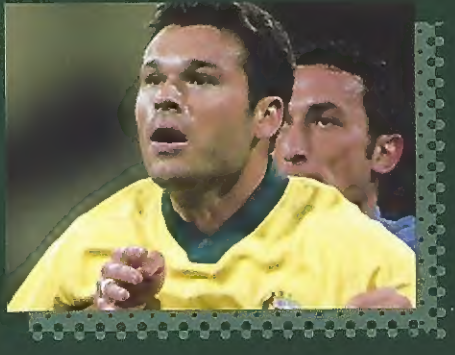

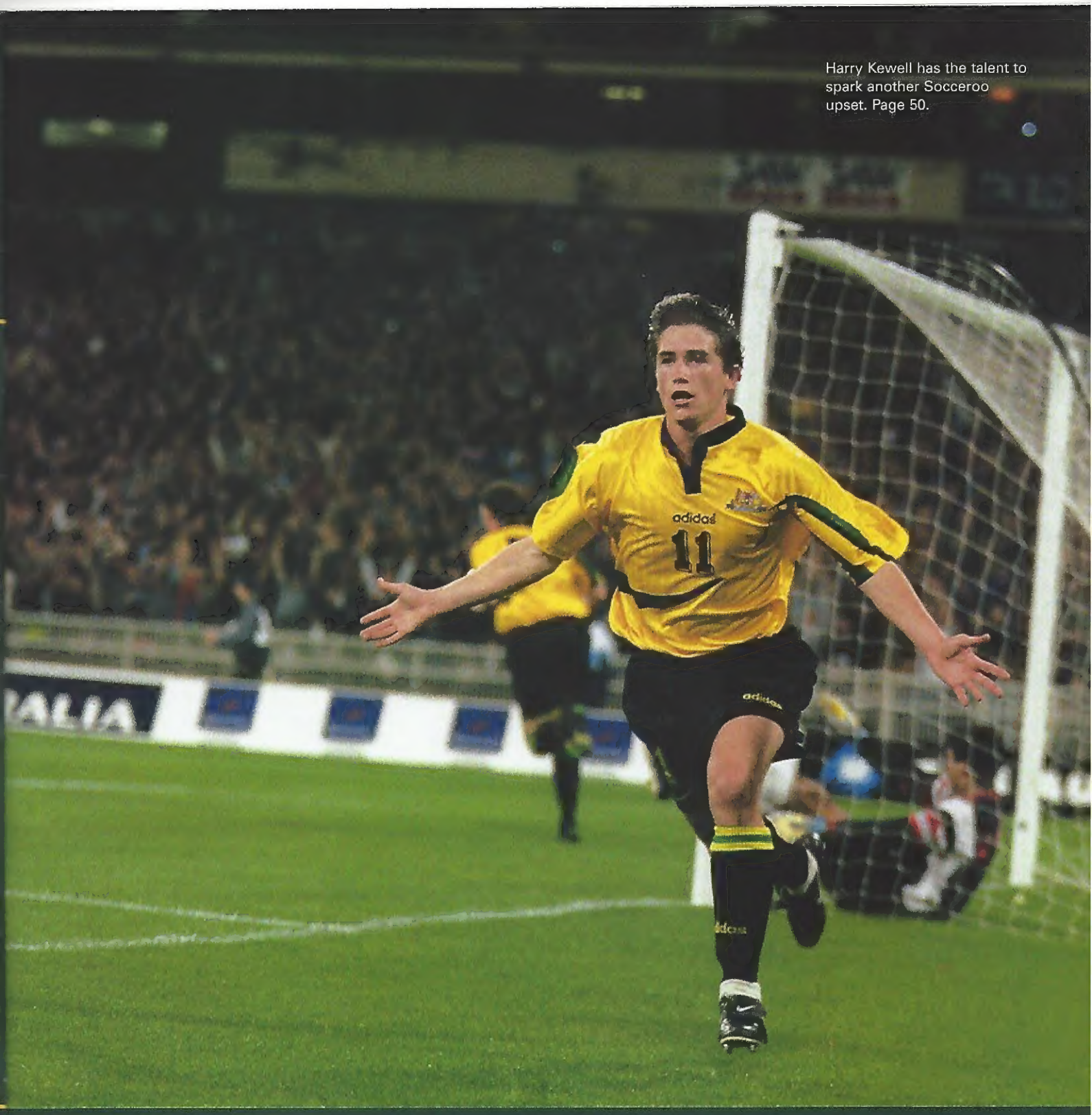

Harry Kewell has the talent to spark another Socceroo upset. Page 50.

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There's a lot at stake for both teams — France wants revenge for its loss to the Socceroos earlier this year, Australia needs to prove it can match it with the best in the world.

BY MICHAEL COCKERILL

POINT TO PROVE

THROUGHOUT THE PROTRACTED, often emotional, debate about whether this prestigious friendly between Australia and France would go ahead, one word has been consistently overlooked — revenge.

This may have been the thought in the back of the mind of French coach Roger Lemerre, who never once deviated from his stance that the match proceed and he would be bringing as many of his first-choice players as possible with him.

For revenge is a dish best served cold, and both Lemerre and his team have had some time to digest an unpalatable defeat at the hands of the Socceroos during the 2001 FIFA Confederations Cup five months ago.

It was a result which staggered the footballing world — as rare as it was unexpected. It was a game which not only earned much-maligned striker Clayton Zane a place in Socceroo folklore, but eased Australia's passage into the semi-finals of a tournament that was being used as a dress rehearsal for the World Cup.

TOP NOTCH The French have a wealth of talent, including striker David Trezeguet.

ON THE BALL Stan Lazaridis (above) in the rain-soaked semi-final against Japan.
ON TARGET Trezeguet regularly finds the back of the net for club and country.

France, we know, is already assured of its presence in Japan and Korea next year as defending World Cup champions. Australia, we know even better, will be back at this stadium before the end of the month trying to put 28 years of heartache behind it and hurdle the final obstacle to Korea/Japan 2002.

Whether the Socceroos are good enough to join France on football's grandest stage will become clearer after this test.

France is not the world's number one team by chance, and it is not a team in the habit of taking defeat lightly.

Be sure Lemerre and his team — in particular those players involved — will want to atone for the 1-0 loss in Daegu five months ago.

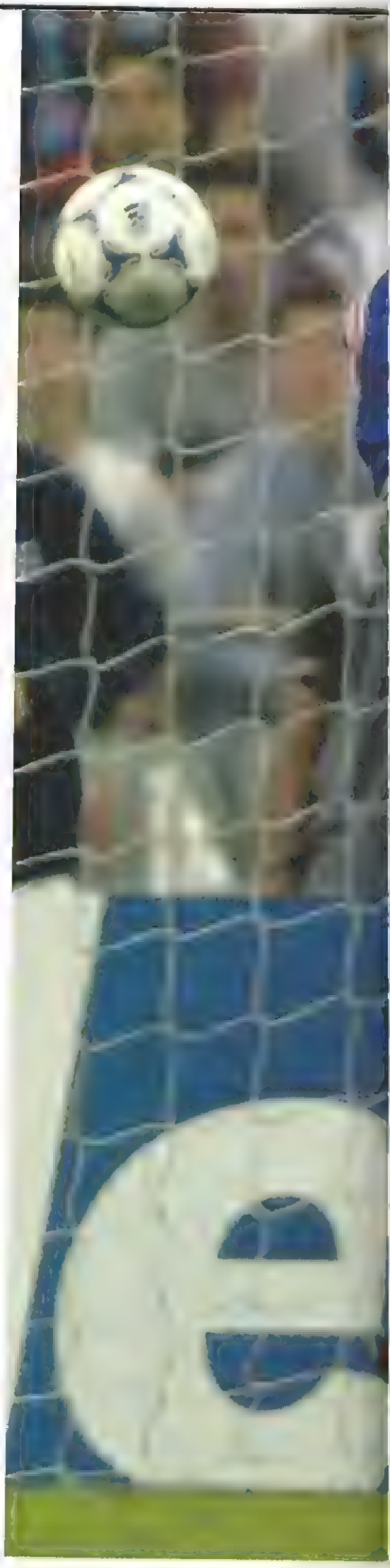
It was clear the result rankled the world champions. None more so than defender Frank Leboeuf, whose dismissal midway through the second half rubbed salt into an already painful wound.

By that stage Zane had put the Socceroos ahead, reacting first to the rebound after Josip Skoko struck the post with a rasping free kick.

Granted, Lemerre had taken the unprecedented step of changing his entire first XI for the game, but the French had still expected a comfortable victory.

With players such as Sylvain Wiltord, Olivier Dacourt, Leboeuf, Laurent Robert, Youri Djorkaeff and Christian Karembeu in the starting side, their optimism seemed to have a strong foundation.

But Australia had other ideas, and with



BLISTERING PACE Thierry Henry's speed leaves defenders gasping the world over.

the defence standing resolute, Brett Emerton proving a handful on the right, and Mark Schwarzer producing a world-class save late in the game, the Socceroos secured arguably their most famous victory of all. An equally rare success over Brazil in the bronze medal playoff earned Australia the unique distinction of beating the world's number one and number two teams in the space of nine days.

Nice as it was, Socceroo coach Frank Farina has never been one to get carried away.

Throughout a busy year, his eyes have been focussed on one thing, and one thing only: to get Australia to the World Cup.

The journey began in Bogota in February and continued through to Coffs Harbour a few months later, before things started to take shape at the Confederations Cup and then the Oceania playoffs in Wellington and Sydney.

This match represents the last chance to prepare for the games which matter most of all, the games which will decide both the fate of the team and probably that of the coach. In that context, the Socceroos could hardly have wished for a better dress rehearsal.

This is the first time France has brought its senior team to Australia, and it comes as reigning world and European champions.

It also comes with several players who missed the Confederations Cup, and who are widely recognised as among the best at their

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The Australian Sports Commission proudly supports Soccer Australia through the Sports Excellence Program, the Australian Institute of Sport and Active Australia

KICKING OUT Australia's David Zdrilic (above) in action againt Brazil.
HEART OF DEFENCE Marcel Desailly (right) leads the miserly French defence.

craft in the world. Add the spice of a mission for revenge, and this is a game with all the right ingredients.

A "friendly" it is, but in name only.

In many ways, the result is of more interest to France than Australia. Having crossed the globe in defiance of the powerful, but ever patronising, English clubs who employ so many of the French elite, the world champions intend to make the trip worthwhile.

The Socceroos, on the other hand, are more concerned with the challenges which lie around the corner, and the performance rather than the outcome is of greater significance. The team the Australians will face is not only the best in the world, but a highly motivated one.

If the Socceroos can acquit themselves well in such daunting circumstances, it augurs well for the clash with the South Americans. To do well against the French, the Socceroos will also need to overcome the dreaded MCG hoodoo. In three previous matches at this famous ground, Australia has failed to secure a victory. It may be a favoured location for the Socceroos, most of all to hometown hero Mark Viduka, but as yet the MCG has been far from a happy hunting ground, even with a large and boisterous gallery providing a magnificent backdrop.

Throw in the Olyroos' heart-wrenching loss to Italy in last year's Olympic Games opener, and the MCG has yet to become the fortress Australian soccer has been searching for. A fortress the game desperately needs.

The team the Australians will face is not only the best in the world, but a highly motivated one.

It has been said many times, most of all by former Socceroo skipper Johnny Warren, that the Socceroos' consistent failure to win at home has been the cause of so much of our World Cup torture. There is no doubt that sooner or later, Australia must turn this particular form book upside down.

Perhaps this match will be the turning point. With the World Cup playoff on the horizon, there could no better time for the Socceroos to exorcise their MCG demons.

Especially the biggest demon of all. It is almost four years to the day since that fateful night against Iran, a match and a result which still cuts deeply into our sporting pysche.

Those who were there will never forget it, the players involved prefer not to remember it. It is a scar which will not heal until Australia qualifies for the World Cup. Hopefully the time has come to heal the wound.

The memory, certainly, will be carried on to the pitch tonight by all those wearing the green and gold, but most of all by those players — Tony Vidmar, Zeljko Kalac, Craig Moore, Mark Viduka, Harry Kewell, Stan Lazaridis and John Aloisi — who were there.

It has been their raison d'etre — excuse the French — ever since. ⊛

Michael Cockerill is a sportswriter for* The Sydney Morning Herald *and a commentator for Channel Seven.

HUNGER FOR SUCCESS

Back in his hometown, Mark Viduka is out to earn the respect he believes the Socceroos deserve. **by David Lewis**

HUNGER AND RESPECT ARE TWO words which jump frequently and emotively from the lips of Mark Viduka. The hunger to peel on a Socceroo shirt against world champions France is all-consuming for the Leeds United striker after just three starts during Frank Farina's 30-match, two-year, reign as coach. As for respect — that's a commodity Australia deserves, but does not, according to Viduka, receive from the game's rulers, FIFA.

An aggrieved Viduka goes so far as to accuse FIFA of displaying flagrant disregard for the green and gold. Though his lineage stretches back to Croatia, the birthplace of his parents, Melbourne-raised Viduka's infatuation with Australia burrows deep into his bone marrow.

And he believes it's time the Socceroos, in keeping with their current ranking of 51st in the global pecking order, were spared the gargantuan hurdles strewn in their World Cup path every four years. Tired of being typecast as perennial play-off pawns, Viduka will be satisfied with nothing less than direct qualification in the future for Australia.

"It's obvious FIFA don't want us to reach the World Cup. They might as well scrap Oceania and forget about us because they have no respect for us or the region," he insists.

"It's ridiculous having to play off every four years, especially when you come up

HOLDING FIRM Viduka's combination of strength and skill make him a handful for any defender.

TRUE BLUE Viduka has rarely turned down the opportunity to pull on the green and gold.

"To appear in front of my home town crowd in Melbourne, that's extra special."

a matter of pride. After all, they are the defending world and European champions."

The only hospitality Viduka plans to extend is off the field.

"I spoke to Thierry Henry and Patrick Vieira after we beat Arsenal 2-1 at Highbury back in September and I've promised them a night out on the town in Melbourne after the match," he reveals. "They are good guys and I'll be more than happy to show them a good time but there won't be any favours on the field once that whistle blows."

The confrontation offers Farina's blossoming squad the chance to underscore its transformation from third world to first rate since his ascension to the top job in 1999.

"We like to think this is the best collection of Australian talent ever, now is our chance to prove it," adds Viduka, who skipped the Confederations Cup and the two qualifiers against New Zealand in June to regain his equilibrium after a gruelling 22-goal, 58-match campaign for Leeds.

"I personally have the hunger back (for the national team). I needed a rest in the (northern) summer after a long season with Leeds where I hardly missed a match after returning from the Olympic Games (in October).

"I was exhausted and my body was telling me to take a complete break from playing. If I'd carried on into June I'd have risked burning myself out and then I'd have been no use to anybody further down the track.

"I love playing for Australia anywhere and I have a big patriotic streak. But to appear in front of my home town crowd in Melbourne, well that's extra special."

So too is Viduka's talent, a melding of sinew and subtlety, which has made him the target of avaricious clubs throughout Europe.

Just four months ago Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale confirmed the Elland Road club had rejected a A$55 million bid from Italians Inter Milan, a sum which would have provided a A$38 million return on its initial investment on the powerful predator.

Instead, it rewarded Viduka with an upgraded four-year deal worth a staggering A$7.5 million a season — that's a cool $130,000 a week and more than enough to keep his beloved Rottweiler Tara in bones, or caviar should she prefer, for a multitude of lifetimes

Even when he's not scoring, the man with the bulldozer physique and the twinkling feet is a serial pest to the opposition.

The 26-year-old — not yet a prolific goal-scorer for his country after only two strikes in 18 appearances at senior level — unselfishly unlocks defences for teammates and effortlessly absorbs the punishment meted out by frustrated defenders.

Frank Farina knows he has a genuine gem in his midst.

"Mark possesses the sort of ability very few others in the world have," he says. "In my view he's an old-fashioned modern centre forward. By that I mean he holds the ball up well, yet also has great balance and technique and two very quick feet.

"He's always looking to create chances for others, which is why David O'Leary (Leeds coach) always picks him, even when he's not hitting the net regularly. That's a sure sign of how highly rated he is by his club.

"It's the same for his country. Whether he is scoring goals or not is not really my prime concern because of what he brings to the team in other areas. He's the type of player who brings everybody else into play."

Farina, who is careful not to get too close to his charges in case the line between professionalism and cronyism becomes blurred, also holds Viduka the person in exalted esteem.

When describing Viduka's demeanour the word "character" continually crops up. It's not just a reference to his innate ebullience, but also a tribute to his deep-seated resolve.

Viduka's resilience was honed during a period of angst in Croatia several years ago when the fans of his club side, Croatia Zagreb, viciously turned against the easy-going builder's son after the goals briefly dried up and drove him to depart for Celtic where he scored 27 times before relocating to Leeds.

"He also has something which really top-class players tend to share and that's a big dose of humility," reveals Farina. "He's genuinely humble and I think it's one of the cornerstones of his character. The last thing he ever does is to try and big note himself."

Humble, perhaps, but certainly not short of self belief.

"You need to have a bit an ego at this level, otherwise you get eaten alive," contends Viduka. "I'm used to being in the spotlight and under pressure and it doesn't faze me. I've learned to deal with it. I try and stay centred and not get too carried away when things are going well or too depressed when they are not. I try to stay level-headed at all times."

After an erratic opening to the current campaign with Leeds, the former Melbourne Knight acknowledges he's still in the process of lopping the rough edges from his game.

"I tend to be a slow starter and this season hasn't been any different," he admits. "But I'm getting there steadily. My fitness is improving and hopefully the goals will soon start to flow. The best is certainly yet to come from me."

Graham Arnold, Farina's assistant, hopes November 2001 follows the same pattern as last November for Viduka, who scored four goals in one game against Liverpool.

"He seems to need a little time to find his stride and with a bit of luck he'll be peaking at just the right time as far as Australia is concerned," he says. Goals or no goals, Viduka's mere presence should be enough to bring the house down.

BALL ON A STRING Viduka's silky skills are unusual for a big man.

France's Fabien Barthez is a unique goalkeeper. He likes to smoke, fancies himself as a winger and enjoys swimming with dolphins. He's also probably the best in the world.

by John Mack

METHOD IN HIS MADNESS

MARSEILLE, JUNE 12, 1998: PLAYERS FROM FRANCE and South Africa are warming up for their France 98 World Cup Group C match in Stade Velodrome. France's Laurent Blanc approaches goalkeeper Fabien Barthez in front of 55,000 fans, takes his head in both hands and plants a kiss squarely in the middle of his bald head.

It is scene which is repeated over the next three weeks and it becomes one of the abiding memories of the tournament.

The Blanc smacker became a well established lucky charm for the French team.

It's history that Les Bleus won the 1998 World Cup for the first time with a sensational 3-0 win over favourite Brazil in the final in Paris, a match Blanc missed because of a dubious sending-off in the semi-final against Croatia.

And the now traditional kiss was there again two years later when Barthez, Blanc and Co won the 2000 European Championship to become the first nation to hold both titles at the same time.

As a result, Barthez is now the owner of soccer's most famous bald head.

Barthez and Blanc, great friends since first playing together for France in 1994, were reunited when Blanc joined Manchester United on a one-year contract at the start of this season.

ABOVE AND BEYOND Fabien Barthez takes a tumble during the 1998 World Cup final.

"The kiss on my head started in 1996," Barthez says of the unusual pre-match ritual. "Let's just say it is a way of saying hello. We even do it off the pitch.

"Everybody saw us doing it during the World Cup. It's like a lucky charm and it has worked so far.

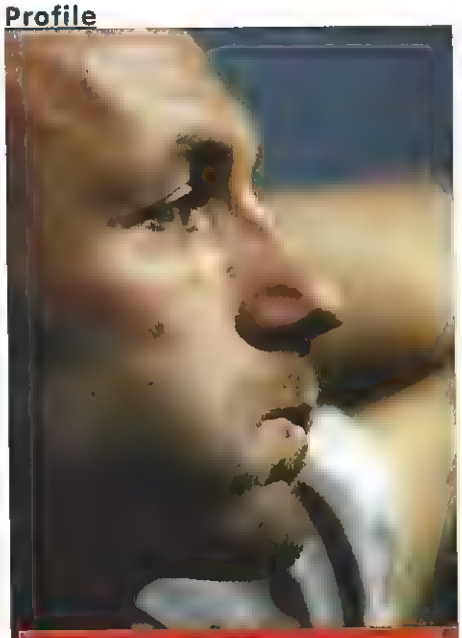
"Laurent is like an older brother to me. He looked after me when I joined the French squad and has been a real friend ever since."

Barthez is not your typical world-class athlete. He has been suspended for using cannabis, he enjoys a cigarette and one of his great loves is swimming with dolphins.

Then there's his long on-again, off-again relationship with Canadian supermodel Linda Evangelista, an area of his life he keeps to himself.

Even his behaviour on the field is, at least, unorthodox, even eccentric. He admits his mind goes walkabout in matches, he occasionally takes throw-ins and it's not unusual to see him running with the ball at his feet even as far as the half-way line.

He has been embarrassed at times, like in Manchester United's 2-2 draw with Blackburn Rovers earlier this season. He was twice caught in possession by Rovers' Italian striker Corrado Grabbi and twice it led to goals. United's legendary manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, was not impressed.



Factfile

10 things you didn't know about Fabien Barthez

1. He has a dolphin tattooed on his right shoulder. He has been fascinated by them since swimming with them at Marineland in the Antibes.

2. He took the World Cup trophy to Lavelanet, the village where he was born, to show it off to the local people.

3. He is a fine player of petanque, the French version of bowls.

4. French midfield genius Eric Cantona was the first to urge Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson to take a look at Barthez.

5. Before signing him, Ferguson feared that, at 175cm and 80kg, he was too small for a goalkeeper.

6. In his first season at Manchester United, he kept a clean sheet in 19 of the 40 matches he played.

7. He admires Sir Alex so much that when United won the Premier League title last season, he asked the club photographer to take a picture of the pair together as a souvenir.

8. A France-only TV advert for McDonald's shows Barthez kissing a sesame seed bun — just as Laurent Blanc kisses Barthez's bald head before matches.

9. His favourite sport outside soccer is motor racing.

10. He features in a French version of the TV show *Spitting Images* as a puppet that is constantly cracking jokes. And Barthez loves it. "It is true I like a good laugh," he says.

"I have been warning him this would happen," he said at the time.

Fabien Alain Barthez was born in the village of Lavelanet, in the Basque region of France, on June 28, 1971.

He is the son of Alain Barthez, a handy rugby union player who played one game for France. His father admits Fabien would have been a useful rugby player himself had he gone in that direction.

"It didn't take us long to notice Fabien was gifted, not only at football but in all sports," he said on his son's official website.

"I often tell myself that even if he hadn't chosen football he would have been an international anyway. It didn't take him long to develop speed, anticipation and accuracy and I don't say that because I'm his father."

Fabien's climb to the top started with three seasons at his local amateur club Lavelanet, where his talents were recognised by Toulouse and he signed as a professional at the age of 19 in 1990.

He played 26 matches there in two seasons before moving to Olympique Marseille in 1992. His 106 matches included the club's win in the European Champions league in 1993.

He was with Marseille when it was relegated to Division Two in 1994 for financial irregularities, but Fabien chose to stay with the club despite the trauma of relegation.

"I had given my word I would stay even if we were demoted," he said. "Of course it is tough when you are not relegated for your performances on the field but that season in Division Two helped me because it taught me a little bit of humility."

In 1995, Barthez joined Monaco, where his 143 games included championships in 1997 and 2000.

By now, Barthez was a permanent in the French national side but was still relatively unknown outside Europe.

Then came the successes in France 98 and Euro 2000 and Barthez was on his way to superstardom.

Meanwhile, at Manchester United, Sir Alex Ferguson was having goalkeeping troubles after the loss of the great Peter Schmeichel to the Portuguese club Sporting Lisbon.

Ferguson had signed Italy's Massimo Taibi from Venezia, but a couple of disastrous performances earned him the unenviable nickname "The Blind Venetian" and before long he was out of favour.

When Mark Bosnich also failed to impress on his return to the club, Ferguson turned his eyes towards Barthez. He signed for United in June 2000, despite his reputation as brilliant but prone to embarrassing errors.

But Ferguson considered his merits outweighed the deficiencies and made him the game's most expensive goalkeeper by stumping up almost A$20 million.

"When I was looking for someone to replace Peter Schmeichel I needed more than just a goalkeeper, I needed a real presence like Peter was," Ferguson said. "That is what I got with Fabien. He is undoubtedly the best in the world. Peter and Fabien are both great distributors of the ball, but where Fabien is better is with his speed.

"We were really aware when he came to us how he could help us on the break and with attacks."

But Barthez isn't always Ferguson's favourite and he was given an old-fashioned rollicking after his Blackburn blunders cost his side two points and added weight to the theory that you don't have to be mad to be a goalkeeper, but it helps.

Barthez disagrees. "I'm completely normal," he said at the time. "People say all the time that goalkeepers are crazy. It is true that when a goalkeeper makes a mistake it leads to a goal and you can't blame anybody else."

"I live day by day and it is the same with football. I play to give pleasure to the fans and to myself."

Barthez has a reputation for doing the unexpected and he doesn't mind admitting some of his methods are unorthodox. He even confessed in newspaper interview that he has trouble concentrating for 90 minutes and that he allows his mind to wander.

"Remaining concentrated for that amount of time is exhausting," he said. "I just have to get away right in the thick of a match. I have 30 seconds, maybe a minute, to make my escape. I look around me and think about what I would like to do in the rest of the game. At the same time, I imagine the possible counter-attack."

Barthez is also a more-than-handy outfield player who loves to run with the ball if he gets the chance.

He often pesters Ferguson to give him a run out and he finally achieved that dream in a match against a Singapore XI earlier this year.

He had England captain David Beckham and club skipper Roy Keane in stitches as he sat on the bench nagging Ferguson to give him a go. Eventually, with United leading 8-1 and with just 10 minutes left he got his wish.

Beckham threw Barthez his No. 7 shirt but the referee ordered him to change and he went on the left wing wearing No. 14.

"Thank goodness he didn't score," an amused Ferguson said afterwards. "If he had, I would never have got him back in goal."

Off the field, Barthez is the antithesis of the showman. He guards his private life jealously and even now he is a genuine superstar he

FULL STRETCH
Barthez is not the tallest goalkeeper in the world, but he could be the most athletic

FREE SPIRIT Barthez has said he needs his mind to wander during matches.
PAST AND PRESENT (Left) Barthez and his Manchester United predecessor, Peter Schmeichel.

still calls father Alain and sister Geraldine in France after every match.

Alain helps keep his son's feet on terra firma.

"He calls me after each game but we still have the same principles we had when he was 15," he said on Barthez's website. "He always questions himself. That's why if he's not good, I tell him right away.

"When he calls me after a game, we talk for a couple of minutes but I always tell him the truth. For instance, I've never told him he's the best goalkeeper in the world.

"I often tell him: 'Fabien, you have to know you are good, but not believe it. The day you believe you are good, you're history'."

Older sister Geraldine can take some of the credit for her brother's success, although she didn't know at the time what her input would lead to.

"As far as I can remember, Fabien always had a ball in the hands or at his feet," she said. "You can't imagine how much time he was spending on it. He often asked me to play with him in our little flat in Lavelanet. If I didn't agree he'd start pleading with me: 'Come on, this is the last time, I swear, I won't bother you any more after that'. Every day was like this!

"We have always been close and we often speak to each other. He phones me after the games and a few sentences are enough to know if he's doing well or not. Fabien listens to what we say.

"Honestly, he's a nice guy !" ⊛

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HEADING ABILITY

PAUL AGOSTINO

Paul Agostino's aerial strength is one of the main reasons he has become a prolific scorer in the German Bundesliga. He has also scored eight goals for the Socceroos. The 1860 Munich centre-forward can head the ball from all angles and is a danger to any defence.

HEAD

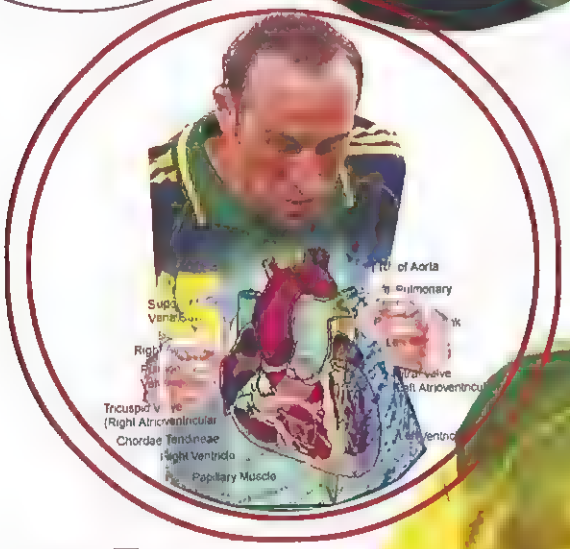
JOSIP SKOKO

One of the quieter figures in the Socceroo line up, Josip Skoko has an outstanding tactical ability on the park. His football brain has made him invaluable to the Socceroos. His quality performance for a victorious Australia against world champions France in the Confederations Cup this June garnered Skoko long-overdue accolades.

MOUTH

KEVIN MUSCAT

No-one could ever accuse Kevin Muscat of being a wallflower. The Wolverhampton Wolves defender can be controversial, but all of his Socceroo teammates will vouch for his ability to motivate the team and put everyone in the right frame of mind. His leadership qualities earned him the honour of captaining the Olyroos at Atlanta.



TORSO

MARK VIDUKA

When Mark Viduka is on the ball, you don't want to be in his way. Standing 187cm tall, this powerfully-built striker can hold off a couple of defenders while retaining full control of the ball. Viduka's height, strength and great ball control make a potent combination. He netted 22 goals last season in the English Premier League.

HEART

DANNY TIATTO

Tiatto's style of play has been described as swashbuckling and whole hearted. His speed and attacking flair have gained him a regular spot in the Manchester City team. Danny is easily the Socceroo with the greatest ability to collect red cards. This left back was voted player of the year for 2000-01 by his club's supporters.

ARMS

SHAUN MURPHY

Not as well known as some of the other Socceroos, Shaun Murphy has impressed with his long throw-ins, among many other qualities. Murphy made his Socceroo debut at age 30 and has since displayed a goal-scoring ability, netting three goals in three games. Murphy's ability to throw into the penalty area is a great weapon for the team.

HANDS
MARK SCHWARZER
Rated as one of the best 'keepers in the English Premier League, Mark Schwarzer's speciality is saving shots at close range. Schwarzer's consistent performances have made him Australia's top choice shot stopper. International recognition came when Schwarzer joined his captain on the bench of the Confederations Cup All-Star team.

FEET
PAUL OKON
Socceroo captain Paul Okon is a versatile player. He's able to play in midfield, as a sweeper or a defender. Regardless of his position on the park, Okon's ability to set up his teammates with precise passes always stands out. He was named on the bench of the All-Star team at this year's Confederations Cup.

LEGS
HARRY KEWELL
When Harry Kewell burst on to the international soccer scene in 1997 during the World Cup playoffs, he was virtually an unknown in Australia. Since then, his skills have made this attacking midfielder a household name. As well as possessing goal-scoring ability, Kewell has great pace and confidence on the ball. His runs leave defenders gasping.

WALLET
MARK VIDUKA AND HARRY KEWELL
This pair's earning capacity keeps increasing depending on who has signed the latest, newest, most expensive contract. Recent newspaper reports suggest Leeds United duo Viduka and Kewell both earn over $100,000 a week in salary and bonuses.

THE PERFECT SOCCEROO

There is a wealth of talent available for the current Socceroo team, but just which qualities would you take from which players to create the perfect Socceroo? **by Sonja Viduka**

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

As the most powerful team in world soccer, France's on-field deeds are finally matching the huge influence it's had off the pitch.

By Kit Galer

CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD AND champions of Europe — France is the first soccer nation ever to hold both titles at the same time. Its current standing as one of the best teams in the world is thoroughly justified as it prepares to defend the world title in Korea and Japan next year and is a fitting reward, if somewhat belated, for the part played by Frenchmen in the founding of the game's great international tournaments.

The French were founding members of FIFA in 1904 and provided the organisation's first president, Robert Guerin.

France played its first international that same year, drawing 3-3 in Belgium with a Brussels select team.

Another Frenchman became president of FIFA in the 1930s and founded the World Cup. Jules Rimet gave his name to the trophy, which was awarded to the winner until it was given to Brazil for perpetuity after it won the event for the third time in 1970.

ON TOP OF THE WORLD
Zinedine Zidane and Marcel Desailly kiss the World Cup trophy.

LIVING LEGEND Michel Platini sparked the golden age of French soccer.
CELEBRATION Then captain Didier Dechamps celebrates the World Cup win.

Frenchmen Gabriel Hanot introduced the European Cup; compatriot Henri Delaunay formulated the European Championships.

But while the French led the world when it came to soccer administration, it is fair to say that for many years the national team, Les Bleus, were huge underachievers in comparison.

The Federation Francaise de Football was established after World War I in 1918, the same year the French Cup also started. The national league championship didn't start until 1933, by which time the French had played in the first ever World Cup finals match, beating Mexico 4-1 in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1930.

France failed to make any impression in the following three World Cups and it wasn't really until the 1958 finals in Sweden — the "Pele Finals" — that the rest of the soccer world began to realise there might be more to French sport than rugby union, tennis and the all-pervading cycling.

The French proved one of the real surprises in the tournament, reaching the semi-finals and a third place largely thanks to the efforts of two forwards, the elegant Raymond Kopa and the dynamic Just Fontaine.

Fontaine, born in Marrakesh, Morocco, only just made the French World Cup squad, but how glad the nation was that he did. Fontaine finished the campaign with a World Cup record 13 goals, including a hat-trick against eventual finalist Sweden in the first round and four more against West Germany in a memorable 6-3 third-place play-off win. Brazil had earlier ended French title hopes with a 5-2 win in the semi-finals.

Significantly, in those long-ago days before sponsorship, Fontaine scored his goals against the Germans in a borrowed pair of boots. The original pair had taken so much punishment in the tournament that they fell to bits prior to the game.

Kopa, who created much of the ammunition fired so effectively by Fontaine, was one of the first French stars to move abroad, enjoying great success with Spanish club Real Madrid.

Indeed, French club Stade de Reims contested the first European Cup final, where it went down 4-3 to Real in a thriller.

Kopa played a starring role for the French side and the Spaniards were so impressed they signed him to play alongside legends Alfredo di Stefano and Ferenc Puskas.

Three years later, Reims went back for more and the star-studded Madrid beat them again, this time with Kopa in the Real line-up.

The 1960s was a decade which gave French soccer fans little to cheer for, but the 1970s, and one player in particular, marked an

Champions of Europe, champions of the world. There's nothing left for the French to achieve

CHAMPIONS The French team (above) hold up the European trophy.
BIG INFLUENCE France's development program has produced stars such as Chelsea's Emmanuel Petit (left).

upturn in Gallic fortunes which continues to this day.

Michel Platini, a graceful playmaker in an age of crunching tacklers and tactical overkill, began his professional career with Nancy-Lorraine in 1972. Four years later he made his full international debut against Czechoslovakia and scored with what was to become a trademark free kick.

It wasn't until he transferred to St Etienne that the soccer world really took notice. St Etienne won the French league title in 1981 and Platini became an institution in the midfield alongside Alain Giresse and current Fulham manager Jean Tigana.

In 1982 he was desperately unlucky not to pilot France to the World Cup final in Spain, the team losing on penalties in the semi-final against West Germany after a 3-3 draw.

This was the dawning of a golden age for French soccer in general and Platini in particular. He moved to Juventus in Turin the following year and won the first of a staggering three successive European Footballer of the Year awards. The following year he guided Juve to the Serie A league title and the European Cup Winners Cup.

The summer of 1984 saw Platini lead the French to their first European Championship. On home soil and with thousands of delirious countrymen cheering them on, the French stormed through to take the title, beating Spain 2-0 in the final. And captain Platini was unstoppable, scoring a tournament-record nine goals in five matches.

In 1985 it was largely Platini's goals which helped Juventus to the European Cup final and victory against Liverpool in the match which sparked the Heysel Stadium tragedy in Brussels.

His final World Cup campaign was in Mexico in 1986. Again he coaxed them through to the semi-finals but once more West Germany proved a stumbling block.

AUTOGLASS
18

Platini retired in 1987, went on to coach the national team and played a major part in organising the 1998 World Cup competition on French soil.

It was to be 12 years before the French again made an impact on the world stage. Eric Cantona masterminded the rise of England's Manchester United to almost unbelievable heights of world popularity at club level, but the explosive French star was very much the enfant terrible of French soccer and was rarely able to re-create his club performances at international level.

When the breakthrough came it was, fittingly, on home soil. French manager Aime Jacquet, fused talents such as Marcel Desailly, Didier Deschamps, Emmanuel Petit and the stunning Zinedine Zidane, who had taken over Platini's mantle at both international and club level where he starred for Juventus before transferring to Real Madrid in the past northern summer.

France swept all before in the 1998 World Cup and brushed aside an out-of-sorts Brazil 3-0 in the final, with two goals from Zidane and one from Petit.

The French didn't stagnate, either. Two years later they again dominated international competition to win Euro 2000 in Rotterdam. The side had gradually evolved under new coach Roger Lemerre but it looked as if they would have to settle for second place as Italy battled to hang on to the Marco Delvecchio goal by which it led.

It wasn't until injury time that Sylvain Wiltord, now with Arsenal, swooped to net the equaliser and in extra time the French had the edge and triumphed with a golden goal from young striker David Trezeguet.

So, champions of Europe, champions of the world. There's nothing left for the French to achieve — except to do it all again. ⊛

WORLD CLASS Products from the French development program are now stars in the best leagues in the world, including Youri Djorkaeff (right) at Kaiserslautern in Germany and Frank Leboeuf (opposite) for English club Chelsea.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS Teammates for club and country, Thierry Henry and Silvaine Wiltord celebrate after scoring another goal.

Q&A

FRANK & HONEST

Since his appointment as national coach, Frank Farina has led the Socceroos to some of their biggest wins, including a victory over France in June. Now, on the eve of the final World Cup qualifing match, Farina speaks openly about the team's preparation, its new system and his selection quandaries.

by Doug Booth

How important is this game against France?
I think it's vitally important in our preparation. We've played 30 internationals in the past two and a half years and this is the last one before THE two biggest games in Australian soccer history. If we can manage to qualify it will give soccer greater power in terms of demanding that Oceania gains direct entry to the World Cup finals. It seems strange that one time we have to play the fifth best South American side, then we are against the third best Asian side, then it's back to South America. But you couldn't ask for a better lead-in match than to play the current world, European and Confederations Cup champions.

Have you been concerned over the lack of international games?
No, I don't think so. Last time around we didn't play enough international matches. We will have played 31 matches by the time we tackle the fifth South American qualifier. The reality is you are never going to get your best players in all of those 31 games. But it was important to play a lot of games. I'm pleased with the amount we have played. I'm quite confident that the France game will stand us in good stead. We have played a lot more games than in past campaigns.

What's the ideal number of internationals in the lead-up to a World Cup qualifier?
I said I wanted between 30 and 35 in the two years leading up to that and we've done that. It's very difficult in our situation where we don't play qualifiers apart from the island countries and New Zealand so we have to fill the gaps in other ways. My priority was to get as many games in Europe as I could purely and simply because our player base is there. The Confederations Cup and friendlies

LEADING LIGHT The Socceroos have climbed the world rankings under Frank Farina's stewardship.

such as Chile were important because I changed a few things from last time round.

What have you changed specifically?
We are playing a different system. I needed the players to feel comfortable about it which they are. The general formation of the team is 4–4–2. It's what we have been sticking to. I decided to make the change from the sweeper system because a lot of our players were playing in similar 4–4–2 formations with their clubs. It's very hard to get players to change the way they play when you don't have them for any length of time leading up to international games. It was very evident in the match against Brazil that we were at sixes and sevens. It was my first game in charge. I wanted to try something else and I was confident we had the players to do it.

Coming back to the France game, just how good are they?
They are the best team in the world, it's as simple as that. Most of their players have been together for seven to eight years and they have been successful because the team formation is functioning well. People say they have only really dominated for the past five to six years but it has been much longer than that. They were a powerful team in the 1980s, as well. The majority of their current team has come through their junior formation centres. And the success of their under-17s in winning their World Cup recently is an indication that their youth structure and policy is working well.

Can we learn from the French?
I think our youth structure is going really well. We are producing a lot of good young players which is evident in the number of young players overseas. A lot head overseas

TOUGH DECISION The wealth of talent at Farina's disposal will cause him some selection headaches.

I'm really enjoying what I'm doing and hoping to achieve what all sports-mad Australians want — that's qualification for the World Cup finals.

before they are 17 which shows that our youth coaching and structure is working.

How did you see the 1-0 win over France?
The French went into the Confederations Cup with a very good side — missing a few players, as we were. They are the holders of every major trophy so they don't want to lose games. On that night we played extremely well. It was arguably one of the best performances by an Australian national team. But we are not kidding ourselves. It wasn't a fluke by any means but they will be very wary of that result this time around.

Do you think the French will be looking for revenge?
Yes, I'm certain of that. I'm sure they will want to turn the tables on the defeat. It will be a very competitive fixture. To call it a friendly, I doubt if that will do the game justice because they have lost only four games since they won the World Cup in 1998. One of those defeats was against Australia, who are not exactly regarded as one of the powers in world football.

How do you cope with the pressure of being national coach?
I play a bit of golf. I'm a dangerous 19 handicapper at the moment. One of the biggest things I miss is the day to-day involvement at club level. Pressure is what you make it. You make your own pressure I think. Mine is more of a positive pressure where I'm really enjoying what I'm doing and hoping to achieve what all sports-mad Australians want — that's qualification for the World Cup finals.

Did you see the development of French football while you were playing at Strasbourg?
Definitely. I played with Frank Leboeuf, who was only quite young and hadn't broken into the national team at that stage. There was also Olivier Dacourt (now at Leeds) who had come through their "centre de formation" (talent identification program). There were a lot of players coming though and it's a reflection of the professionalism and the good coaching while I was there that so many players were developed at junior level.

EXPERIENCE Having played at the highest level himself, Farina knows what his players face on the pitch.

What are your plans for the squad between the French game and the first leg of the World Cup qualifier?
It's ridiculous to suggest the players will be going back to their clubs. There's just not enough time between the French match and the first leg. It's in the best interests of the clubs for FIFA to make sure the qualifying games are played as quickly as possible.

What's the situation with Mark Bosnich?
Mark's biggest problem is that he hasn't played first-team football for about two years. We used to have a wealth of keepers but now, I agree, the ranks are a little diminished. There are players back here in Australia who are doing well. But Mark's definitely not out of the question. He has a great passion for playing for his country. He's had a few problems at Chelsea where he's not playing and that doesn't help anyone but he's definitely not out of it.

And Paul Okon?
You can carry one or two players on teams that are a little bit underdone. But Paul has proven in the past that when he has been selected he has done exceptionally well. The classic example was Scotland when he hadn't played for his club for 10 weeks with a broken foot but he came out and was man of the match. It's not a major concern. He's fit and getting regular games and playing with the first team as well. If I had seven to eight players in that situation who were potentially in the first 11, as we had last time around, we had a lot who were underdone. They weren't playing regularly for their clubs. It's one of my major philosophies — you can't have too many players in the team who are not playing regularly at the highest level.

SOCCEROOS
TEAM PROFILES

GOALKEEPERS

ZELJKO KALAC
(Roda JC Kerkrade)

Born: December 16, 1972.
Height: 202cm.
Weight: 91kg.
Career: Sydney United, Leicester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Roda JC Kerkrade.
Caps: 38.
Debut: v Malaysia (1992).

Giant goalkeeper, inevitably nicknamed "Spider", Kalac has great athleticism and, not surprisingly, is dominant in the air. Currently playing in the Dutch first division with Roda JC.

MARK SCHWARZER
(Middlesbrough)

Born: October 6, 1972.
Height: 196cm. Weight. 86kg.
Career: Marconi, Dynamo Dresden, Kaisers autern, Bradford City, Middlesbrough.
Caps: 16. Debut: v Canada (1993).

Rated one of the best goalkeepers in the English premier league, Schwarzer cuts a commanding figure in the Middlesbrough goal. Started his career in Sydney with Marconi, where Christian Vieri was a teammate, before joining Germany's Dynamo Dresden and then Kaiserslautern. Signed for Bradford City in November 1996, and he is still regarded as one of the best keepers the club ever had, despite joining Boro just four months later.

DEFENDERS

CRAIG MOORE
(Glasgow Rangers)

Born: December 12, 1975.
Height: 186cm.
Weight: 76kg.
Career: Glasgow Rangers, Crystal Palace, Glasgow Rangers.
Caps: 19. Debut: v Ghana (1995).
Goals: 1.

The talented central defender rejoined Rangers at the end of March 1999 on a free transfer as part of a cost-cutting exercise by then newly-relegated English division one Crystal Palace. Moore had first played in Rangers' senior side in 1993-94, but the arrival of big name overseas stars saw him decide to head south to London in October 1998 for a fee of $2.5million. Forms an excellent partnership at club and international level with Tony Vidmar. areas.

STEVE HORVAT
(Melbourne Knights)

Born: March 4, 1971.
Height: 186cm.
Weight: 85kg.
Career: Melbourne Knights, Hajduk Split, Carlton, Melbourne Knights.
Caps: 28.
Debut: v South Africa (1994).

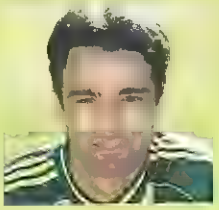
The former Hajduk Split player can play as sweeper or stopper, reads the play well and is strong in the air. Attempts to play in England were foiled by work permit problems and the experienced Horvat is now back with Melbourne Knights.

KEVIN MUSCAT
(Wolverhampton Wanderers)

Born: August 7, 1973.
Height: 180cm.
Weight: 73kg.
Career: Sunshine, Heidelberg, South Melbourne, Crystal Palace, Wolverhampton Wanderers.
Caps: 39
Debut: v Kuwait (1994)
Goals: 9

Has a well-deserved reputation as a rugged defender with a crunching tackle. However, Muscat also has considerable skill and has spent the past five years playing in England.

Joined Crystal Palace in 1996 and helped them win promotion to the premier league but was then transferred to division one Wolves for $500,000. Has become a huge favourite with the club, is the current skipper and a former player of the year.



SHAUN MURPHY
(Sheffield United)

Born: November 5, 1970.
Height: 185cm.
Weight: 76kg.
Career: Blacktown City, Heidelberg, Notts County, West Bromwich Albion, Sheffield United.
Caps: 17.
Debut: v Chile (2000).
Goals: 3.

No-nonsense defender who has been playing in England for nine years now. Joined Sheffield United on a free transfer from West Brom in the northern summer of 1999 and has established himself as a first team regular and crowd favourite with the Yorkshire club.

Has impressed at international level when given his chance.

TONY VIDMAR
(Glasgow Rangers)

Born: July 4, 1970.
Height: 187cm.
Weight: 80kg.
Career: Adelaide City, Ekeren, NAC Breda, Glasgow Rangers.
Caps: 50.
Debut: v Czechoslovakia (1991).
Goals: 2.

Originally a left-sided defender, Vidmar has now developed into a classy central defender with the Scottish premier league giant. Loves to get forward and can cause a lot of trouble in opposition penalty

TONY POPOVIC
(Crystal Palace)

Born: July 4, 1973.
Height: 193cm.
Weight: 90kg.
Career: Sydney United, Sanfrecce Hiroshima, Crystal Palace.
Caps: 41 Debut: v Colombia (1995).
Goals: 6

Highly-rated defender who joined the South London club earlier this season and has already gone a long way to stabilising a defence which let in 70 goals last season. Strong and reliable, with an eye for goal, Popovic is cool on the ball and rarely wasteful when it comes to distributing it.

MIDFIELD

LUCAS NEILL
(Blackburn Rovers)

Born: 9th March, 1978.
Height: 183m.
Weight: 80kg.
Career: Australian Insitute of Sport, Milwall, Blackburn Rovers.
Caps: 2.
Debut: Vs Saudi Arabia (1996).

Neill made a late run for inclusion in the Socceroo squad with a blistering start to the season at Blackburn. A defender who can also play on both sides of midfield and in attack, Neill has plenty of natural talent and confidence, but a history of niggling injuries has hampered his progress. Neill played with Milwall last season where he brought an extra dimension to the team with his skill on, and intelligent use of, the ball

While at Milwall, Neill made no secret of his desire to play in the Premiership and it did not take long for Blackburn Rovers boss Graeme Souness to offer him a trial. He did enough to persuade Souness to make an offer to Milwall and he signed for the Ewood Park club for A$1.8m in September 2001.

MARCO BRESCIANO
(Empoli)

Born: November 2, 1980.
Height: 172cm.
Weight: 76kg.
Career: Carlton, Empoli.
Caps: 5.
Debut: v France (2001).

Tenacious attacking young midfielder carving out a reputation with Empoli in Italy's Serie B and rumoured to be already attracting talent scouts from the country's Serie A giants.

JOSIP SKOKO
(Racing Genk)

Born: December 10, 1975.
Height: 177cm.
Weight: 77kg.
Career: Hajduk Split, Racing Genk.
Caps: 20.
Debut: v Macedonia (1997).
Goals: 2

Skoko's midfield creativity is an asset to the national team. Exquisite close control and eye-of-the-needle passing makes Skoko the type of player to turn a match with one touch. Currently playing in the Belgian first division with Racing Genk after a successful spell in Croatia.

MILE STERJOVSKI
(Lille)

Born: May 27, 1979.
Height: 180cm.
Weight: 79kg.
Career: Wollongong Wolves, Sydney United, Parramatta Power, Lille.
Caps: 3.
Debut: v Scotland (2000)

Making a name for himself in the French first division with Lille, a club which has come from division two to a Champions League berth in just two seasons.

The small Brittany town is having a wonderful time of it and Sterjovski has become a firm favourite, starting his European campaign with a full match against Manchester United at Old Trafford in September

Classy young striker likely to attract attention from Europe's biggest clubs.

PAUL OKON
(Middlesbrough)

Born: April 5, 1972.
Height: 180cm.
Weight: 80kg.
Career: Marconi Stallions, FC Bruges, Lazio, Fiorentina, Middlesbrough.
Caps: 31.
Debut: v Czechoslovakia (1991).
Goals: 1.

The Socceroos' much-travelled captain is currently with English premier league Middlesbrough, the third European country in which he has graced the top flight since leaving Sydney. Fine reader of the play and an accurate distributor, Okon enjoys playing sweeper but is also at home running the midfield.

DANNY TIATTO
(Manchester City)

Born: May 22, 1973.
Height: 175cm.
Weight: 73kg
Career: Melbourne Knights, Salernitana, Stoke City, Manchester City.
Caps: 23.
Debut: v Colombia (1995).
Goals: 1

Speedy left-sided midfielder who has been one of the Socceroos' great improvers in recent years. Has learned to curb a fearsome temper although his tough tackling and uncompromising attitude can still get him into trouble.
Became a regular first team player in the season Manchester City swept through the English first division one to win promotion. Last season was a wretched one for the club and the performances of Tiatto were just about the only bright spot, earning him City's player of the year award.

STEVE CORICA
(Sanfrecce Hiroshima)

Born: March 24, 1973.
Height: 173cm.
Weight: 68kg.
Career: Marconi Stallions, Leicester City, Wolvernampton Wanderers, Sanfrecce Hiroshima.
Caps: 40.
Debut: v Kuwait (1993).
Goals: 7.

The experienced Corica is an efficient link between midfield and attack with good ball skills and a good shot. Is currently playing in Japan's J-League after distinguished spell in England with Wolves.

BRETT EMERTON
(Feyenoord)

Born: January 22, 1979.
Height: 185cm.
Weight: 85kg.
Career: Sydney Olympic, Feyenoord.
Caps: 24.
Debut: v Chile (1998).
Goals: 4

Surely destined to be the next Socceroo superstar after Kewell and

Viduka, Emerton's speed and ball control makes him a constant threat on the wing. He has thrilled local crowds for many years with his ability and willingness to take on opposition defences. Now with Dutch giant Feyenoord, but hotly pursued by a number of clubs. Captained the Olympic team for Sydney 2000.

STAN LAZARIDIS
(Birmingham City)

Born: August 16, 1972.
Height: 175cm.
Weight: 76kg.
Career: Adelaide Sharks, West Ham United, Birmingham City.
Caps: 52.
Debut: v Kuwait (1993).

Vastly experience wingback who was a big success in the English premier division with West Ham before a big money move to division one Birmingham in the summer of 1999. Pace and overlapping skills make him a constant threat to opposing defences. Also offers a goalscoring option from free kicks.

STRIKERS

PAUL AGOSTINO
(TSV 1860 Munich)

Born: June 9, 1975
Height: 184cm.
Weight: 78kg.
Career: Adelaide Sharks, Yverdon, Young Boys of Berne, Bristol City, TSV 1860 Munich.
Caps: 16
Debut: v Chile, 1996.
Goals: 8.

Strong in the air with a powerful shot, Agostino proved a thorn in the side of many top Bundesliga defences in Germany last season. Scored a hat-trick in 17-0 win against the Cook Islands.

MARK VIDUKA
(Leeds United)

Born: October 9, 1975.
Height: 187cm.
Weight: 91kg.
Career: Melbourne Knights, Croatia Zagreb, Glasgow Celtic, Leeds United.
Caps: 16.
Debut: v South Korea (1993).
Goals: 2.

Developing into one of world soccer's most potent strikers, Viduka arrived at English premier league Leeds at the start of last season with a big reputation, after being named Scottish premier league player of the year in 2000 following stunning 27-goal season with Celtic. The big, strong and surprisingly skilful Viduka began his Leeds career quietly and it wasn't until he returned from Olympics duty with the Olyroos last September that he really started to make the English top flight sit up and take notice. Liverpool certainly has cause to remember him, the Melbourne-raised striker scoring all four goals in a memorable 4-3 win against the Merseysiders. Cost Celtic $9 million when they signed him from Croatia Zagreb and Leeds paid nearly double that to take him to Elland Road. Big-name clubs such as Real Madrid and AC Milan were willing to pay a lot more for him, but Viduka signed a new five-year contract with Leeds in July this year

DAVID ZDRILIC
(Unterhaching)

Born: April 13, 1974.
Height: 183cm.
Weight: 80kg.
Career: Sydney United, FC Aarau, SSV Ulm, Unternaching.
Caps: 22.
Debut: v New Zealand (1997).
Goals: 18.

Mobile and speedy, Zdrilic can cause all sorts of problems for defenders with his ability to turn quickly in confined spaces. Currently in the German second division with Unterhaching, he scored eight goals in the 31-0 thumping of little American Samoa in April last year.

HARRY KEWELL
(Leeds United)

Born: September 22, 1978.
Height: 179cm.
Weight: 78kg.
Career: Leeds United.
Caps: 10.
Debut: v Chile (1996).
Goals: 3.

Rated by Leeds United chairman Peter Ridsdale as worth a staggering $148 million, the 1999-2000 campaign saw Kewell pick up Britain's young player of the year award and the Leeds player of the year trophy. Sydney-born Kewell made his English premier league debut in the 1995-96 season as a 17 year-old and has rapidly developed into one of the most exciting young soccer talents in the world. Fast and clever, Kewell operates wide on the left wing and is a regular scorer for his club. Achilles tendon problems resulting in surgery marred last season but this campaign he has shown signs of returning to his best.

JOHN ALOISI
(Osasuna)

Born: February 5, 1976.
Height: 188cm.
Weight: 83kg.
Career: Adelaide City, Standard Liege, Royal Antwerp, Cremonese, Portsmouth, Coventry City, Osasuna.
Caps: 23.
Debut: v Macedonia, 1997.
Goals: 15.

Deadly finisher with great reflexes near goal, the much-travelled Aloisi had established himself as a big favourite at Coventry City until a falling out with manager Gordon Strachan. Coventry went down and Aloisi headed for the Spanish primera liga's Osasuna. Scored six against Tonga this year.

FRANCE
TEAM PROFILES

GOALKEEPERS

FABIEN BARTHEZ
(Manchester United)

Born: June 28, 1971.
Height: 183cm.
Weight: 76kg.
Career: Toulouse (1989-92), Olympique Marseille (1992-95), Monaco (1995-1999), Manchester United (2000-).
Caps: 43.
Debut: v Australia (1994).

Rated one of the best goalkeepers in the world, the 30-year-old shaven-headed Manchester United star has won every team honour the game can offer. Barthez won a European Cup winner's medal with Olympique Marseille in 1992-93, his first season with the club. A move to AS Monaco in 1995 and he won two French league titles there before Manchester United paid $20million for his services on May 31 last year. He quickly proved his value by helping United win the English premiership in his first season.

Barthez actually won his first international cap against Australia on May 26 1994. Ever present in the team as "Les Bleus" won the World Cup on home soil in 1998, he conceded only two goals in the whole tournament. Two years later he missed just one Euro 2000 match.

Voted world's best goalkeeper last season by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics.

MICKAEL LANDREAU
(Nantes)

Born: May 14, 1979.
Height: 184cm.
Weight: 80kg.
Career: Nantes (1998-).
Caps: 1.
Debut: v Mexico (2001).

DEFENDERS

VINCENT CANDELA
(AS Roma)

Born: Oct 24, 1973.
Height: 179cm.
Weight: 76kg.
Career: Toulouse (1992-95), Guingamp (1995-96), AS Roma (1996-). Caps 31.
Debut: v Turkey (1997).
Goals: 1.

It is a big step from Guingamp to the Olympic Stadium in Rome, but one the ever-impressive 28 year-old Candela seems to have accomplished with ease. A tenacious tackler and left-sided defender who loves to go forward, he has impressed as a key member of the AS Roma side which won the Serie A title last season. His path to a regular first team spot in the French national side has been made harder by the continued excellence of the experienced Bixente Lizarazu.The attacking left-sided defender has impressed in Serie A since making the big step from En Avant Guingamp to AS Roma in 1997.

However, his route to a regular first-team place in the national team has been blocked by the continued excellent showings in a blue shirt by Bixente Lizarazu. Both will be in European Champions League action this northern winter so it will be interesting to see which way Lemerre leans.

Candela made three appearances in Euro 2000 qualifiers and he scored his first international goal in the generally disappointing 2-0 victory against Andorra in Paris.

MARCEL DESAILLY
(Chelsea)

Born: Sept 7,1968.
Height: 183cm.
Weight: 80kg.
Clubs: Nantes (1984-92), Marseille (1992-94), AC Milan (1994-98), Chelsea (1998-).
Caps: 92.
Debut: v Sweden (1993).
Goals: 1.

They call the French captain "the Rock" and certainly many an opposing attack has come to grief at both club and international level against this Ghana born man mountain. One of world football's most outstanding central defenders, Desailly joined English premier league Chelsea from AC Milan at a cost of $12million in 1998. The deal was sealed before the 1998 World Cup in France and Chelsea fans were able to watch and drool over their new signing as he turned in a string of performances which saw him named man of the tournament.

Desailly, who took over as national and club captain from the veteran Didier Deschamps, was a key figure in France's World Cup and Euro 2000 double. Superb in the air, strong in the tackle, quick and above all strong and an excellent distributor. Won the European Champions League with both Olympique Marseille and AC Milan, scoring for the Italian club in the 1994 final. He was also a key figure in Chelsea winning the FA Cup.

Initially a midfield creator, Desailly has moved seamlessly to defence, where his strength and speed is used to its best effect.

MICKAEL SILVESTRE
(Manchester United)

Born: Aug 9, 1977.
Height: 184cm.
Weight: 83kg.
Career: Rennes (1994-98), Inter Milan (1998-99), Manchester United (since 1999).
Caps: 8.
Debut: v Germany (2001).
Goals: 1

Skilful defender made his French league debut with home town Rennes at the age of 18 in 1995-96.

Became first team regular and moved to Inter Milan in time for the 1998-99 Serie A season, in which he made 18 league appearances.

Joined Manchester United in September 1999 and took time to settle in the heart of the defence, but switched to left back in last season and played in every match.

Has won two English premiership titles with United. Consistent performances earned him a French call-up and Silvestre made his full international debut in February this year, coming on to replace Marcel Desailly in a friendly against Germany at the Stade de France.

More appearances off the substitutes' bench followed before his full debut the following months.

Member of the squad which won the Confederations Cup in Japan and Korea in June this year.

FRANK LEBOEUF

(Marseille)

Born: Nov 22, 1968.

Height: 183cm.

Weight: 72.

Clubs: Lavallois (1988-90), Strasbourg (1990-96), Chelsea (1996-01), Marseille (2001-). Caps 46.

Debut: v Norway (1995).

Desailly's former soulmate at the heart of the Chelsea defence, the veteran Leboeuf is now seeing out his footballing days with his hometown club in the south of France. A classy, ball-playing centre-half who rose to prominence following his transfer from RC Strasbourg to Chelsea in July 1996. Made his international debut the previous summer against Norway but it was after moving to England that he really established himself as one of his country's top defenders.

For club and country, Leboeuf's fine passing skills ensure he is a player capable of turning defence into attack. He also scored regularly from the penalty spot for Chelsea - a knack which proved useful when he saved France from an embarrassing draw with lowly Andorra in the qualifying round with his late strike from the spot.

This son of Marseilles spent six years with Strasbourg between 1990 and 1996, having previously played for Stade Lavallois. A member of the 1998 World Cup squad, Leboeuf started only one match of that tournament - the final against Brazil, when he took the place of the unluckily suspended Laurent Blanc to enjoy his finest hour.

LILIAN THURAM

(Juventus)

Born: Jan 1, 1972

Height: 185cm.

Weight: 79kg.

Career: AS Monaco (1989-96), Parma (1996 2001), Juventus (2001-).

Caps: 68

Debut: v Czech Rep (1994).

Goals: 2.

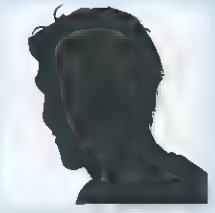
Rated one of the world's best defenders and has a key role at the back for les Blues. Can play either wide or in the middle and is the man at the heart of one of the meanest defences in international football.

Technically excellent with superb distribution, Thuram is also an uncompromising tackler and played a key role in the unique French World Cup-Euro 2000 double. A big favourite with the fans in his five years with Serie A's Parma, he is now winning the hearts of Bianconeri supporters in Turin.

Emerged as one the best defenders in the world during the 1998 World Cup, in which he was arguably France's best player behind the peerless Zinedine Zidane.

His attacking qualities were well displayed by his stunning semi-final double strike against Croatia, but he is first and foremost an accomplished defender. Made French debut in 1994, but it took a brilliant display against Spain in Euro 96 to secure a regular starting place.

MIDFIELD



CLAUDE MAKELELE

(Real Madrid)

Born: Feb 18, 1973.

Height: 169cm.

Weight: 65kg.

Career: Nantes (1993-97), Marseille (1997-98), Celta Vigo (1998 2000), Real Madrid (2000-).

Caps: 10.

Debut: v Norway (1995).

Yet another in the impressive line of African-born who have found a home in the blue of France.

Makalele was high on the Juventus shopping list as a replacement when the Italians' Dutch star Edgar Davids was banned and was also talked about as moving to Italy as part of the deal taking superstar Zinedine Zidane. But Makalele stayed at Real to line up alongside "Zizou".

A creative talent with a knack of scoring important goals, Makalele was a member of the French Olympic side at the Atlanta Games in 1996.

ROBERT PIRES

(Arsenal)

Born: Jan 29, 1973.

Height: 180cm.

Weight: 74kg.

Career: Reims (1989-92), Metz (1992-98), Marseille (1998-99), Arsenal (2000-).

Caps: 57.

Debut: v Mexico (1996).

Goals: 11.

Formerly a winger with Metz, Pirès blossomed into an excellent playmaker with Marseille. Chased for months last year by Arsenal, he finally signed for the Londoners just days after helping France to win Euro 2000, thus adding a European medal to the World Cup medal he had won in Paris in 1998 after playing in three World Cup matches. Versatile midfielder who can play in the centre as well as wide on the wings.

EMMANUEL PETIT
(Chelsea)

Born: Sept 22, 1970.
Height: 185cm.
Weight: 67kg.
Career: Monaco (1985-97), Arsenal (1997-2000), Barcelona (2000-01), Chelsea (2001-).
Caps: 53.
Debut: v Poland (1996).
Goals: 4.

Big favourite with football fans in England where he spent three highly productive years with Arsenal under compatriot Arsene Wenger and to where he returned in the close season to join London's Chelsea after a largely unspectacular season in the Spanish first division with Catalan giant Barcelona.

They used to call Roberto Baggio "the Divine Ponytail" but "Manu Petit" now sports the most famous one in world football. Cost Chelsea nearly $20million but manager Claudio Ranieri knew he was buying a central midfield player of consummate skill, even if his temper can occasionally get the better of him.

Won an English premiership medal in first season with Arsenal but frequent clashes with the media and fans saw him move to Spain with Gunners teammate Marc Overmars in 2000. Barcelona, however, proved a big disappointment for Petit. When he was picked for the first team it was as a defender rather than in a creative midfield role and Chelsea lured the 1990 French Young Player of the Year back to Britain during the close season.

Petit possesses a fierce shot and great determination, never better illustrated than in the 1998 World Cup final when he memorably burst through the Brazilian defence in injury time to sweep the ball past goalkeeper Claudio Taffarel to make it 3-0 and send the St Denis into raptures.

ZINEDINE ZIDANE
(Real Madrid)

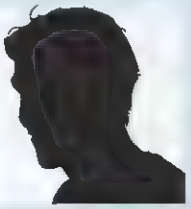
Born: June 23, 1972.
Height: 185cm.
Weight: 78kg.
Career: Cannes (1987-92), Bordeaux (1992-96), Juventus (1996-2000), Real Madrid (2001).
Caps: 68.
Debut: v Czech Republic (1994).
Goals: 18.

Became forever a French football hero after scoring two headed goals in the 1998 World Cup final against Brazil and "Zizou" was undoubtedly the star of that competition, evidenced by his capturing of FIFA's European and World Footballer of the Year honours. With perhaps Rivaldo of Barcelona and Ronaldo of Inter Milan, he is acknowledged as one of the three current greats of world football, but neither of the two Brazilians have won the honours in the game Zinedine has collected.

World and European champion with the French national team, a key figure in the great 1990's Juventus side. And at the end of last season a new challenge beckoned and "Zizou" transferred to become a new shining star in the mighty Real Madrid line-up. An old style attacking central midfielder. Zidane has a knack of scoring important goals, instinctively knows the most direct way to get there, lays the ball off beautifully and remains an imposing physical presence. No wonder Real coach Vincente del Bosque was so pleased to bring him to Spain.

Of Algerian origin, Zidane remains a powerful yet elegant player on the pitch, and a reserved and respectable personality off it. He is well known for his calmness and confidence when in control of the ball; his dexterity, mobility and good eye are reminiscent of such legends as Pele. His decisions on what to with the ball are wise and insightful, as his passes and runs are often deadly. Yet, not only is Zidane a talented footballer with impressive personal skills and a great affinity for effective team work, but also a role model for great sportsmanship.

And now he is with the mighty Real Madrid, following in the footsteps of such great stars as di Stefano, Puskas, Gento, Hugo Sanchez, Butrugueno, Roberto Carlos, raul and so many more. "I'm the centre of attention, but the only thing that matters is what happens on the playing field," he said recently of his transfer to Madrid. The 29-year-old admitted he was still struggling to find top form, but vowed: "I'll do many important things for Real Madrid". And, you can bet, for France.



ERIC CARRIERE
(Nantes)

Born: May 24, 1973.
Height: 175cm.
Weight: 67kg.
Career: Real Madrid (1995-97), Nantes (1998-2001), Olympique Lyon (2001-).
Caps: 4.
Debut: v South Korea (2001).

Last season's French player of the year joined Olympique Lyon this year at a fee of $24million to help boost the club's European Champions League push for honours.

PATRICK VIEIRA
(Arsenal)

Born: June 23, 1976.
Height: 191cm.
Weight: 82kg.
Career: Cannes (1993-95), AC Milan (1995-96), Arsenal (1996-).
Caps: 42.
Debut: v Netherlands (1997).
Goals: 4.

The tall, rangy Vieira is a formidable onfield presence both for his English club Arsenal and in the French midfield. Temperamental and physical force with a thunderous tackle and ball skills and distribution surprisingly delicate for such a big man, Vieira has a game built largely on confrontation and antagonism, but has won the hearts of the Arsenal fans with a series of spectacular displays. One of the game's hardest workers, it is only really since the international retirement of French captain Didier Deschamps that the 25 year-old Senegal-born Vieira has had any chance to establish himself in the national side. Seemingly destined to be one of the game's greats.

CHRISTIAN KAREMBEU
(Middlesbrough)

Born: Dec 3, 1970.
Height: 178cm.
Weight: 73kg.
Career: Nantes (1990-95), Sampdoria (1995-97), Real Madrid (1997-2000), Middlesbrough (2000-01), Olympiakos (2001-).
Caps: 50.
Debut: v Finland (1992).
Goals: 1.

The much-travelled Karembeu is currently with Greek first division Olympiakos after a distinguished career which has seen him win a World Cup winner's medal, a Euro 2000 winner's medal, two European Cup winner's medals and the French title. Signed for Real from Italy's Sampdoria midway through the Madrid giant's European Champions League winning campaign in 1997-98 and scored a couple of vital goals to see his new side on the way to the final. He followed that up with a 1998 FIFA World Cup winner's medal, but his club form was patchy and he moved to English premier league Middlesbrough for $6 million. He made his French debut against Finland in 1992. A hard-tackling and strong player, Karembeu moved to Olympiakos at the beginning of this season.

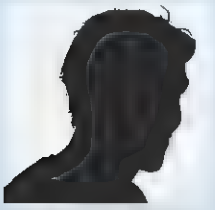
YOURI DJORKAEFF
(Kaiserslautern)

Born: Sept 3, 1968.
Height: 179cm.
Weight: 70kg.
Career: Grenoble (1984-90), Strasbourg (1990-91), Monaco (1991-95), Paris St Germain (1995-96), Inter Milan (1996-99), Kaiserslautern (1999-).
Caps: 74.
Debut: v Israel (1993).
Goals: 28.

Though approaching the veteran stage and playing in the shadow of Zinedine Zidane and Emmanuel Petit since the 1998 World Cup triumph, Djorkaeff has been a marvelous servant for the French. His country's best player at Euro 96, he scored 10 goals in his first 15 internationals.

Won the European Cup Winners' Cup with Paris St Germain, scoring four goals en route to the final, and was voted 1995 French Player of the Year. Also won the UEFA Cup with Inter Milan in 1997 but was eclipsed by first Ronaldo and then Christian Vieri, and chose to take his skills to the Bundesliga and Kaiserslautern.

An outstanding attacking midfield talent, Djorkaeff made his international debut in 1993, and has been a fixture in the French side ever since. A clinical finisher, he is an excellent runner with the ball and can unlock any defence with a killer pass.



OLIVIER DACOURT
(Leeds United)

Born: Sept 25, 1974.
Height: 175cm.
Weight: 70kg.
Career: Strasbourg (1995-98), Everton (1998-99), Lens (1999-2000) Leeds United (2000-).
Caps: 3
Debut: v South Korea (2001).

Dacourt became Leeds United's record signing when he completed a $21million switch from French first division Lens in June last year. A powerful and combative midfielder, Dacourt became an instant hit with the Everton faithful during his brief spell in England with a string of outstanding performances in the heart of midfield.

With his excellent ball-winning qualities and sound technical ability, Dacourt has been likened to his long-time friend Patrick Vieira.

STRIKERS

THIERRY HENRY
(Arsenal)

Born: Aug 17, 1977.
Height: 188cm.
Weight: 78kg.
Career: Versailles (1992-93), Monaco (1993-97), Juventus (1999), Arsenal (1999-).
Caps: 20.
Debut: v South Africa (1997).
Goals: 8.

A reunion with former Monaco manager Arsene Wenger at Arsenal, transformed the fast and tricky Henry from a winger of great potential to a lethal central striker.

Outstanding young prospect was young French player of the year in 1996 and helped France to the quarter-finals of the world youth cup in Malaysia the following year. But 1998 was his finest moment, making the most of late selection for the 1998 World Cup squad and finishing his country's top scorer in the tournament with three goals. Move to Juventus was not a success but his $30 million move to England eight months later proved a masterstroke. Finished third top scorer in his first season in the English premiership with 26 goals and again was France's top scorer with three goals in five games when les Blues won Euro 2000 later that year.

STEVE MARLET
(Fulham)

Born: Jan 10, 1974.
Height: 178cm.
Weight: 69kg.
Career: Red Star 93 (1996), Auxerre (1996-2000), Olympique Lyon (2000-01), Fulham (2001-).
Caps: 10
Debut: v Turkey (2000)

A dangerous striker with an eye for goal, the 27-year-old Marlet broke English premiership newcomer Fulham's transfer record when he signed for the Londoners from Olympique Lyon for $31 million on August 28 this year. Former French star defender Jean Tigana, now managing Fulham, thought so much of the former Auxerre champion that he signed him to a five-year deal.

International opportunites so far limited by wealth of attacking talent at Roger Lemerre's disposal.

DAVID TREZEGUET
(Juventus)

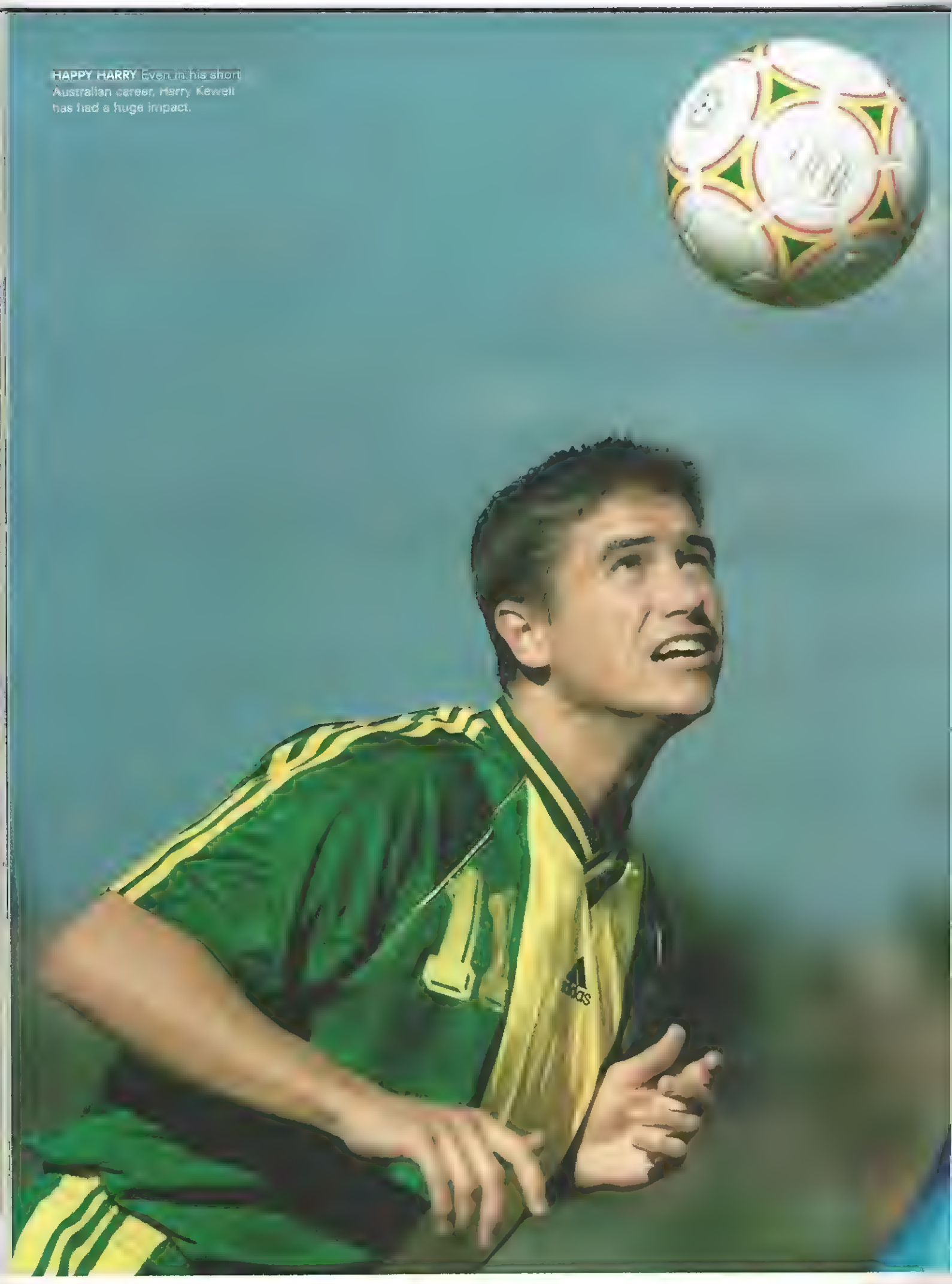
Born: Oct 15, 1977.
Height: 190cm.
Weight: 80kg.
Career: Monaco (1995-2000), Juventus (2000-).
Caps: 32.
Debut: v Spain (1998).
Goals: 17

Played his part in France's 1998 World Cup triumph, but it was his spectacular performance in last year's Euro 2000 final which made his name. Trezeguet came on as substitute for Youri Djorkaeff in the final against Italy in Rotterdam and seized his only chance to sweep the ball past Italy's Francesco Toldo for the win. His lap round the stadium waving his shirt in the air remains a memorable moment. A tall, gifted striker who grew up in Argentina, Trezeguet scored 20 league goals for Monaco in 1999-2000, helping them to the French championship for a second time during his time there. It was that sort of scoring ability which attracted Juventus. Trezeguet was the leading scorer for the Turin side last year in his first Serie A season, netting 14 times in 25 games. Strong in the air and effective on either side of his body, Trezeguet adapted quickly to Italian football. He proved to be a complete forward, very strong in overhead play and effective with both feet.

SYLVAIN WILTORD
(Arsenal)

Born: May 10, 1974.
Career: Rennes (1995-98), Bordeaux (1998-2000), Arsenal (2000-).
Caps: 38.
Debut: v England (1999).
Goals: 14.

Wiltord became Arsenal's most expensive player ever when he signed from for $38million from Bordeaux in August last year. He came with a big goalscoring reputation having been Bordeaux's leading scorer in its French championship triumph in 1999 and performing well in the European Champions League the following season. A significant member of the French national side which won Euro 2000, he scored two goals in six qualifying matches and also netted one in the final victory against Italy in Rotterdam.



HAPPY HARRY Even in his short Australian career, Harry Kewell has had a huge impact.

profile

THE WORLD AT HIS FEET

Harry Kewell has all the skills needed to be one of the best players of his generation, but without the foresight of a canny Scot, he may never have been a Socceroo.

by David Lewis

HAVE YOU HEARD THE ONE ABOUT the Scotsman, the Australian and the English? If you haven't, the punch line is Harry Kewell and the joke is on England. English pain is Australia's gain when it comes to Kewell. Australia's most cherished soccer export wanted to play for the land of his English father Rod when he was a starry-eyed Liverpool fan growing up in Sydney's west.

But the kid with genius in his genes opted for Australia when he was a 17-year-old after a Scotsman, Eddie Thomson, who was Socceroo coach at the time, shut the door on the auld enemy forever by handing Harry his first senior cap.

The reverberations of Thomson's history-altering act in 1996 resonated more loudly than ever when former England coach Kevin Keegan publicly declared his disappointment that Kewell was beyond his reach.

Without Thomson's intervention, Kewell, who holds dual nationality, might have been seduced by English overtures and could now be flying down the left wing for Sven-Goran Ericksson's team as the answer to a long-standing conundrum in that position.

He'd also be guaranteed a ticket to Japan and Korea next year with David Beckham and the boys.

"I'm always pleased to put one over on the English, us Scots will do anything to get back at them," snickers Thomson, who first encountered Harry as a ruby-cheeked, spiky-haired 16-year-old at the World Youth Championships in Ecuador in 1994.

"I knew from the moment I saw him play he was something really special. He and Brett Emerton were the fullbacks against Spain, Nigeria and Brazil and they were superb. When I got back to Australia I said (about Kewell) to TV reporters at the airport that I'd just discovered the best wingback cum midfielder Australia has ever produced. I also knew he'd one day be even better as an attacker."

When Thomson telephoned Leeds a little over a year later to request Kewell's release for that fateful friendly with Chile, the Yorkshire club's hierarchy thought it was a practical joke.

"Once I'd convinced them I was serious, I didn't have a problem getting him. He was in the reserves in those days and Leeds weren't too worried about losing him."

That was before the opulent home, a fleet of sports cars, an estimated $150,000 per week in wages, a multi-million dollar Adidas contract, an actress wife and pop star adulation.

It was also before spiteful and self-serving speculation about Kewell's loyalty to Australia by media pundits who have never even spoken to him.

"I wanted to tie him up for Australia rather than lose him to England and I'm proud of what he's gone on to achieve," adds Thomson. "I did the same with Mark Viduka when he was 18 and a possible target for Croatia.

"I also selected Harry for his first cap because I was short on players for the game and he didn't let me down. We had a player sent off after 20 minutes and went down 3-0 but Harry was outstanding. He was at left back and I told him just to play things simple. After three minutes he sold Ivan Zamorano a dummy and strolled away with the ball and I knew then he had something extra special.

"Afterwards I got a call from Alex Ferguson at Manchester United wanting to know about him. I told him Harry was a champion. He'd waltz into the England team now, I know they wish they had him."

AUSTRALIAN MADE Kewell could be one of the best Socceroos of all time.

CONTROL FREAK Kewell's close control has drawn rave reviews.

Much has been made of his infrequent appearances for his country — just 10 in all — but Kewell vehemently denies his patriotism has been diluted by seven seasons at Leeds United, who have been accused of blocking the release of players for international matches.

"I'm as proud as any Australian when I pull on that green and gold shirt," he says. "I'm disappointed when people question my commitment because I had to make a choice and I opted for Australia. I have no regrets about that."

Kewell, who is flourishing again after being afflicted with Achilles tendon problems for the bulk of last season, is a firm fan of Socceroo coach Frank Farina. Kewell credits Farina with helping him come to terms with the club versus country dilemmas which have brought him unwanted headlines and provided ammunition for his detractors.

"Frank has played at the top level in Italy and France and he understands the difficulties players face when trying to juggle their club commitments with their country," he says. "I'm always available for Frank when he decides to pick me. He tries to call me up only for the matches that really matter and of course I appreciate that."

Kewell, who has played in just one of Farina's 30 matches at the helm, has never understood the allure of friendlies. But a tussle with world and European champions France is an exception.

"It's a match that's very important to us" he says. "They have class right across the park — even their second team would be world class. This is great preparation for us going into the South American match. It might sound funny but perhaps we shouldn't be playing them now because they'll be after revenge for what happened at the Confederations Cup.

"But we won't be overawed. We'll respect them because France are the best but we won't be scared of them."

The French, beaten by Australia in June when Kewell and Viduka were absent, won't be relishing facing a player Farina says will be "one of the best of this era".

"Harry has speed, size, technique, he can take people on, is good in the air and can score goals. Is there anything I forgot?" he says. "There's also a natural shyness about him. I like the manner he displays both on and off the field. He doesn't seek the limelight like some players do and is not a big time Charlie.

"He just gets on with it and lets his feet do all the talking."

And, when they do, it's in the universal language of balance, poise and grace understood by all soccer fans. ⊛

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THE BEST IMAGES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

CS7066

ONE FOR THE AGES

The Socceroos made history when they beat France for the first time earlier this year.

By Finn Bradshaw

IF AUSTRALIA DOES QUALIFY FOR THE World Cup finals later this month, one match will stand out as a evidence of the Socceroos' ability to match it with the best in the world. That match was played last June when Australia came away with a 1-0 victory against the world champion French team during the Confederations Cup.

Australia has had mixed success at the Confederations Cup, a bi-yearly tournament among the best teams from the six soccer confederations (covering the regions of Europe, Asia, South America, North America, Africa and Oceania). In 1997, the Socceroos surpassed expectations by reaching the final, where they copped a 6-0 hiding from Brazil. In 1999, the Socceroos failed to qualify after losing to New Zealand.

This year, they won the Oceania section, only to be faced with a tough group stage that included the world champions, France, 1999 Confederations Cup champion Mexico and co-host South Korea.

The first match was against Mexico. Defying the pundits, the Socceroos controlled the match to spring a surprise 2-0 win. If the soccer world was surprised at that result, it was flabbergasted by the next one.

The French team had swept all before it since winning the World Cup on home soil in 1998. In 2000, they came back from being 1-0 down in the 90th minute to beat Italy and win the European championship in extra time. Prior to playing Australia at the Confederations Cup, France had beaten South Korea 5-0 in an awesome display of soccer power.

Maybe the dominance shown in that match was France's undoing. By leaving the entire team from the South Korea match on the bench, coach Roger Lemerre hoped to rest his stars for later in the tournament. That's not to say the side he fielded against Australia was poor — World Cup winning players Frank Leboeuf, Christian Karembeu and Youri Djorkaeff played, but so did four players earning their first cap.

Despite bringing on stars Patrick Vieira, Robert Pires and Nicholas Anelka later in the

GOING IN HARD Laurent Robert and Brett Emerton battle for the ball.

COMING THROUGH Brett Emerton goes past Oliver Dacourt during the Socceroos victory.

game, France never found a way past the Australians.

"This is a great result. We played the world champions and would have been happy to keep the score down," Australian coach Frank Farina said after the match. "In the second half we played exceptionally well. When we had possession, we had lots of strength and pace. We were good on the counter."

Australia had gone ahead on the hour mark when France's rookie goalie Gregory Coupet could only deflect a swerving free kick from Josip Skoko into the post before an onrushing Clayton Zane smacked the rebound into the back of the net.

Aussie hearts were in their mouths three minutes later when France thought it had scored the equaliser, but the header from first-gamer Frederique Nee was disallowed for offside. To keep the result safe, the Socceroos needed an outstanding save from goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer five minutes from time, who miraculously clawed a looping header from Laurent Robert out of his right upper corner.

Australia grew in confidence throughout the match and had a great chance to go ahead in the 50th minute when Brett Emerton cut himself free and sent a curling left-footer past Coupet, but it flew just past the wrong side of the far post.

After the match, Lemerre praised the "collective spirit" of the Australian lineup and said the Socceroos had "played smart to beat us. They played the simple game to perfection."

France's best chance came off a free kick in the 43rd minute when an unmarked Leboeuf should have slotted home after

taking a cross in the goal square. Instead the Chelsea defender glanced it wide.

France produced few dangers for Aussie goalie Mark Schwarzer. Nee missed the mark a few times and the Middlesborough goalie was only seriously tested by a 35-metre drive from defender Nicolas Gillet.

Although Australia later lost to Japan in the semi-finals, denying them a rematch with France in the final, the Socceroos came away with third place after beating another of soccer's giants, Brazil. The victory over the four-time World Cup winners confirmed what the match against France had suggested: Australia is ready for the big time. Now, it just has to qualify for it. ⊛

(TOP) SLIDING TACKLE France's Camara goes hard at the ball against Tony Vidmar.
(BELOW) EYES ON THE BALL Australia's Josip Skoko and France's Christian Karembeu.

Factfile

How the teams lined up on June 11, 2001:

AUSTRALIA: Mark Schwarzer, Kevin Muscat, Craig Moore, Tony Popovic, Tony Vidmar, Brett Emerton, Steve Corica, Paul Okon, Josip Skoko (78, Marco Bresciano), Stan Lazaridis, Clayton Zane.

FRANCE: Gregory Coupet, Zoumana Camara, Frank Leboeuf, Nicolas Gillot, Jeremie Brechet, Christian Karembeu, Youri Djorkaeff (87, Patrick Vieira), Olivier Dacourt (73, Robert Pires), Laurent Robert, Frederique Nee (70, Nicolas Anelka), Sylvain Wiltord.

eyewitness

Former Socceroo captain Paul Wade looks back on the first time Australia and France met on a soccer field.

Ooh, aah, CANTONA

MAGIC MAN Paul Wade (above) and the Socceroos were another side to suffer at the hands of Eric Cantona's genius.

IT'S RAINING, IT'S POURING, THE OLD MAN is snoring ... you know the nursery rhyme. This kind of day occurred on 26 May, 1994, when the Socceroos played France, the old man of world football, in Japan for a friendly. All the pre-match talk centred around how many goals the power house of world football were going to put past us.

Why was that the main topic of discussion? Robbie Slater, then playing at Lens in the French first division, had brought the issue up with some of the players and the French media.

We first laid eyes on the French team when we finished training the day before the game. We were packing up the balls, bibs and drinks when the French walked in. It was like two boxers staring each other down.

Except we knew most of their names, which club they played for and what position they played. They walked in like they owned the joint and probably thought we were ground staff.

All Aussie eyes were on the controversial Eric Cantona. He had recently kicked the bloke over the fence and won the league and cup double with Manchester United. There was every reason we should have been gawking at him.

The last to leave the pitch was Slater, as he was catching up with his French peers. Boy, we gave him heaps for switching from his broad Aussie accent to one originating from somewhere near the French Riviera. He even used all those hand gestures that put passion into every word. It was probably jealousy, but we were wondering "Who's side is he on anyway?".

The last French player onto the pitch was the great Cantona. He was half way down the tunnel when I passed him. I drummed up the courage to say something. "Congratulations on your success this season."

All six-foot-four inches of him just kept walking past, eyes straight ahead. Not a glance, not even a nod. All right, maybe he didn't know that I too had played in a championship side. Come to think of it, I've played in two. Maybe it was my physical appearance — people have said that I looked like a drowned rat at times. Maybe to be called ground staff was a compliment.

Anyway, when Robbie told us that they were wondering if they could get the score to 10, coupled with the Cantona incident, I was pumped up.

On a day when ducks would have stayed indoors, our tactics were simple — kick and chase. Those tactics will never bring the crowds to see us a second time, but we thought we had no choice.

The French did the exact opposite. They played one and two touch football, but that's all it was before we won the ball back. Spider Kalac had to make the odd save to keep us in the hunt, but for the most part he wasn't called into action.

The greatest injustice was that Eric Cantona scored from a header, giving them the win. But as the nursery rhyme suggests, they would not have wanted to get up in the morning. ⊛

TOUGH ON THE BALL
Slater's hard-nosed style won over fans wherever he played.

A FRENCH LOVE AFFAIR

When Robbie Slater signed with French team Lens, he was just trying to get his career on track. By the time he left, he was one of the club's all-time greats.

By Patrick Mangan

IT'S YOUR DREAM SOCCER WEDDING, really: the happy couple joined by 1000 fanatical soccer fans outside the church in northern France, setting flares alight, then erupting into football songs during the ceremony. Absolute pandemonium. For who? One Robert Slater, from Picnic Point, Sydney, Australia.

"The local paper had printed details about the wedding and the scene outside the church was incredible," says the red-headed Aussie soccer player responsible for the mayhem.

"There were hundreds of Lens supporters there, and they piled into the church waving flags and scarves and singing songs. It was brilliant!

"The priest didn't quite see it that way, though. He gave up in the end. He said 'Sign the book and get out."

Not content with featuring prominently in the wedding photos, the Lens fans came along to the reception, too. "I had to put on a couple of kegs of beer for them in the car park," he smiles. "It's a great memory."

For Slater, it was typical of what would become an enduring love affair with the fans of the French club, who recently voted him their second favourite Lens player ever. But life had looked very different for Slater a few years earlier during a bleak first season in Europe with Belgian giants Anderlecht after his transfer from Sydney United.

Stuck in the reserve team throughout his debut year in 1990, and living in a dingy one-bedroom apartment that shook with the

rumble of passing trains, Slater became disillusioned as the dismal northern winter gnawed at his bones.

"That was just a nightmare. It was easily the low point of my career. There I was in a flat with no telephone, just a TV with all the channels in French and Flemish. The trains went so close to my window you could wave at the people who were going past.

"And with the noise, the only way I could get to sleep was by leaving the TV on almost non-stop. I'd read lots of novels, have some beers, and smoke. When I thought I'd had enough, I'd go to bed, or go and get another six-pack. It was pretty horrible."

Salvation came in the shape of Lens, a distinctly unglamorous French industrial town. Slater had never heard of it, but thankfully his agent had.

"It was my lucky break. I wasn't even going to go, but I went and it changed my life."

His agent, Vladi Pavkovic, had arranged for him to play in a trial game for the second division club. Slater was unimpressed and, when he arrived to see a landscape dotted with coal mines, and Lens itself, a nondescript little town with a population of just 35,000, his mood failed to improve.

A couple of miles out of town, though, was the imposing Stade Felix Bollaert, capacity 55,000, a structure Slater describes as the biggest he'd ever seen. He scored twice in the trial match and was more or less signed on the spot.

"Lens is unique, an old coal mining town, very poor, but the people are absolutely crazy for football. Every time they play, whether they're at the bottom or the top, they've always got 45,000 people at the stadium.

"I hit it off with the Lens fans straight away. It was so easy to settle in there, even though I couldn't speak to anyone to start with because I didn't speak French. I hadn't learnt any at all while I was in Belgium, which I should have done, but everyone was so good to me in Lens.

"The best thing that happened was probably that year in Belgium, because I hit the bottom, and I was determined that it wouldn't happen again. When I got to Lens I was hungry."

Slater's all-action style made an immediate impact in the technical French league and he was instrumental in Lens reaching the second division playoffs. They faced Strasbourg in a match Slater rates alongside the Socceroos' World Cup matches against Argentina in 1993 and Iran in 1997 as his most memorable.

Slater was midfield playmaker for the day after a team reshuffle through injury and he "became Maradona and played a blinder". The crowd in the Stade Felix Bollaert went

LOYAL SERVANT Slater had a long career in the green and gold.

Well-travelled: Slater had successful career throughout Europe, including at English

The coach of the French national team, Gerard Houllier joked that it was a pity Slater wasn't French.

ballistic and Lens won 3-1. After the game the coach of the French national team, Gerard Houllier, later to become Liverpool's manager, joked that it was a pity Slater wasn't French.

Lens was promoted and soon established itself in the first division, with Slater voted fifth-best foreigner in France in 1991, equal with ex-England and then Marseille star Chris Waddle.

Slater was becoming fully integrated in his new home. Not only had he fallen in love with his future wife Nathalie, but, as a post-match TV interview revealed, the suburban Sydney boy was beginning to speak English with a suspicious hint of a French accent. "It wasn't deliberate!" he laughs. "They showed that interview on SBS — I've still got a tape of it – and I sound like a Frenchman. It sounds bloody awful! It was a source of great amusement to a lot of people, but at the time the only people I spoke English to were my parents, maybe once a week. The rest of the time I spoke French."

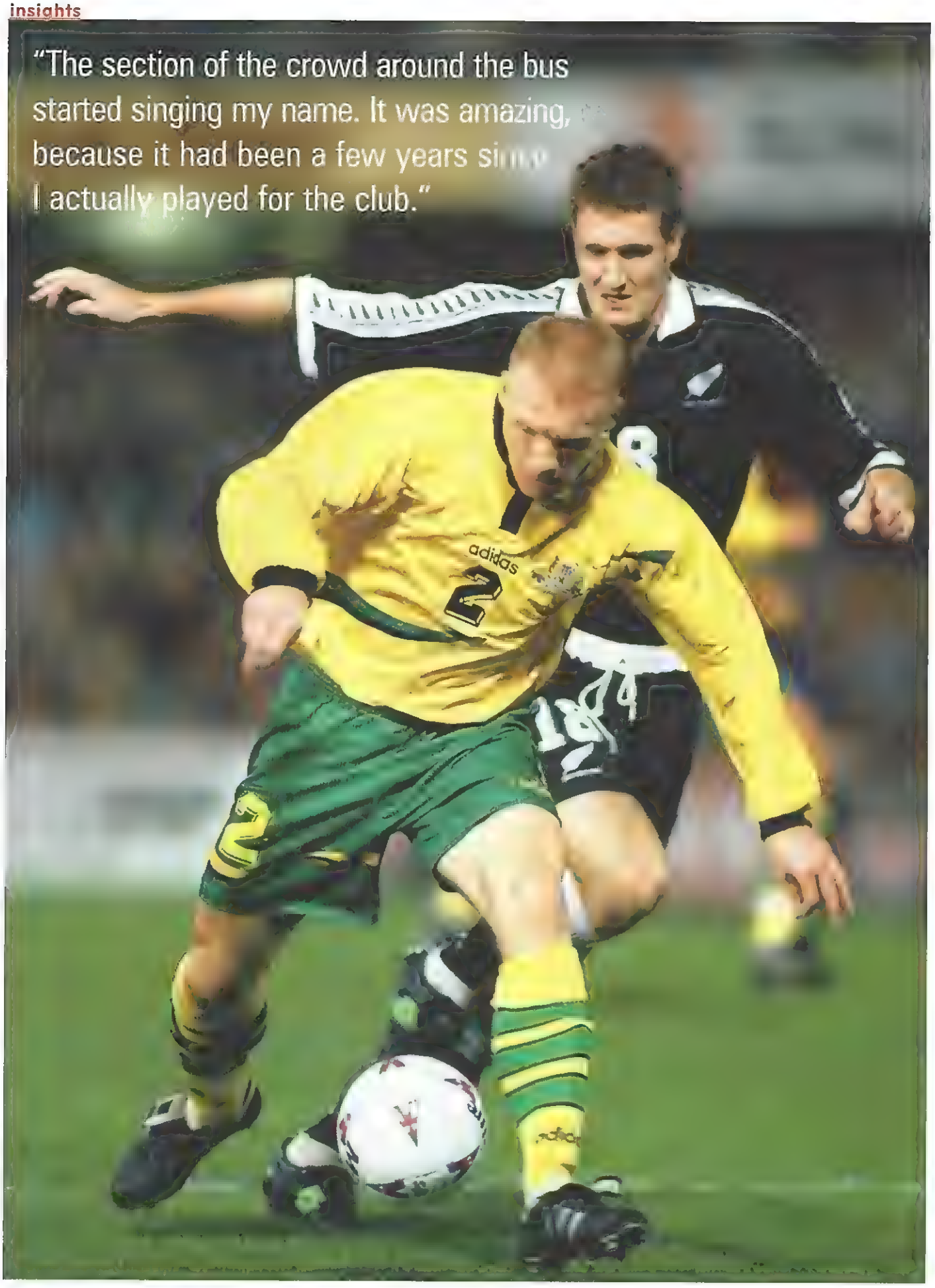
After four years with Lens though, Slater knew it was time for a fresh challenge. He'd earned kudos from around the world for his brilliant displays against Argentina in 1993 and realised that, at the age of 29, it was now or never to make a move to the English league he'd watched religiously on television as a kid.

Leeds United, Middlesborough and Aston Villa expressed interest, but when Blackburn Rovers put their hand up, it was game over as far as Slater was concerned. Rovers, you see, were managed by his boyhood hero Kenny Dalglish.

"I'd had four great years at Lens, but I felt I'd done what I could do with them. I'd grown up watching Match of the Day on TV and, speaking to Kenny Dalglish on the phone, it was very hard to say no!"

Back in France to tie up a few loose ends prior to moving to England, Slater attended Lens' match against Lille as a guest of the club president and the mayor of the town. The president invited him to say farewell to the fans and he was led to the centre of the ground and given a standing ovation

"Usually when a player is transferred he doesn't get the chance to say goodbye properly, so it was a very emotional


"The section of the crowd around the bus started singing my name. It was amazing, because it had been a few years since I actually played for the club."
adidas

REWARDED Slater being presented with the Oceania player of the year trophy in 1993 prior to a game against Paris St Germain.

experience for me. I told them these had been the best times of my life."

There was a bonus for Slater too. "Frank Farina was making his debut for Lille that day, so it was great to be able to upstage him!" he said.

Even after leaving Lens, Slater's unique bond with the club remained intact. He went on to win the English Premier League with Blackburn, before furthering his reputation with West Ham, Southampton and Wolves, but Lens were destined for greater things as well.

They won the French championship in 1998, and Robbie and Nathalie were at their house in Lens watching the victory parade from their balcony on the main street as the team's open-top bus drove past, surrounded by tens of thousands of delirious fans.

"The club president was driving the bus and he stopped it right outside my house, which I didn't expect. The section of the crowd around the bus started singing my name. It was amazing, because it had been a few years since I actually played for the club."

Earlier this year, Slater snapped up the chance to perform in front of his favourite supporters one more time when Lens great Roger Boli invited the Australian to take part in his testimonial match. The game pitted a Roger Boli select XI against the awesomely-talented French national team.

"It was like going into a time warp," says Slater incredulously, "to have the chance to play on my home ground again in front of 45,000 people, to hear them singing your name, especially when you're playing against Thierry Henry, Patrick Vieira, Zinedine Zidane, Robert Pires, even Eric Cantona and Jean-Pierre Papin. Roger Boli's team was selected from all the players he'd ever played with. I was the only non-Frenchman there, which was a big compliment."

Slater had tackled most of the current French squad during his time with Lens and isn't surprised that they've blossomed into a world-class combination. I always got the feeling that it was building towards something. No-one could have predicted how far they'd go, but you could tell with the quality of players they were producing that they were going to be a force."

Slater believes France may be destined for even more success as its conveyor belt of player talent is showing no signs of grinding to a halt.

"If you look at the current crop of players and the others who are coming through they're definitely looking really strong. I mean, they won the World Cup virtually without a recognised striker, and now they have players like David Trezeguet and Thierry Henry. Whether they can win the World Cup again, well, history is against them, but the team is certainly stronger now."

Slater and his young family are settled back in Australia nowadays, but the man who once made a five-hour round trip from Southampton to Lens for a plate of his favourite pasta is still clearly in love with the place.

"My relationship with Lens and with France is ongoing and permanent. My kids were both born there and my wife's French. If we didn't live in Australia, we'd live there. It's like a second home."

Robbie Slater's autobiography,* The Hard Way, *co-written with Matthew Hall, is published by HarperCollins.

Factfile

Robbie's Honours

- NSL Championship with St George, 1983
- English Premier League champion with Blackburn Rovers, 1995
- Southampton Executive Supporters' Club Player of the Year, 1997
- Oceania Player of the Year, 1991, 1993
- 2nd place, Oceania Player of the Decade, 1988-1997

MILE'S AWAY

Mile Sterjovski has helped French club Lille exceed expectations and reach the Champions League. He's hoping he can do the same for Australia during its quest for the World Cup Finals.

By Doug Booth

AT 22, MILE STERJOVSKI HAS already experienced club football at Europe's highest level — the Champions League. The former Sydney United and Parramatta Power striker has cemented a starting spot with unfashionable French side Lille. But he is willing to turn his back on his hopes of fame and fortune to head to Australia and pursue a dream to play for his country in next year's World Cup finals in Japan and Korea.

"Lille obviously doesn't want me to leave because we are doing well in the championship and it is just before the winter break," Sterjovski says. "But the game against France and the qualifiers are a priority for me. It could prove costly for me and it might jeopardise my spot in the starting team at Lille."

Sterjovski says Lille coach Vahid Halilhodzic's policy on who plays and who doesn't is simple. "You have to earn your place in the team. You can't walk straight back in after suspension or injury. He doesn't believe in that," he says.

So the young Socceroo, who made his debut for the senior team in the 2-0 win over Scotland earlier this year, is resigned to sacrificing his hard-earned starting spot to play for the green and gold.

Judging by his performances so far for Lille, however, it will not be long before the powerful striker wins back his place. But, if he gets onto the MCG against World and European champions France, Sterjovski does not expect to play against any of his Lille teammates.

"Football, as you would expect, is huge in France. You don't hear about anything else. But few French-based players are even considered for the national team," he says. "If Frenchmen are seriously considering following their dream to play for their country then they head overseas."

IN THE BIG TIME
Mile Sterjovski celebrates after scoring for Lille in the Champions League.

But Sterjovski believes the success of the national team, composed of players mainly based abroad, merely reflects how good the domestic league is.

"Having those stars such as Henry, Barthez and Zidane playing abroad hasn't weakened the league – it just shows that they are producing so many great players that the biggest clubs in Italy and England want to buy," he says. "French football is a very good standard and a great style; it produces the best players in the world — everyone in the French team started in the French league."

Sterjovski, who scored six goals last season as Lille shocked French football by finishing third last season, believes several of his Lille teammates deserve international call-ups, and not just because of the success the club has enjoyed.

"Our goalkeeper, Gregory Wimbee, is excellent. And at the heart of our solid defence is Pascal Cygan. I think we will surprise a few more people again this season," he says.

Sterjovski and his teammates have certainly not been overawed so far this year with the prospect of playing giants Manchester United in the Champions League.

"I enjoyed playing against Mickael Silvestre at Old Trafford in September and I hope he makes it to Melbourne," he says.

But all the plaudits in the world have not prevented Sterjovski from running the gauntlet of anti-Aussie remarks and innuendo from his Lille teammates before, during and after training.

"They really are cocky because they are the World Champions. They've been talking about winning 5-0 in Melbourne. I'd really like to shut them up," he says. "They don't think they can be beaten. Whenever they talk about football they do it in a really smart-arse way. I'd like to wipe the smiles off their faces on November 11."

First Sterjovski needs to figure prominently in Socceroo coach Frank Farina's thoughts, which looks difficult with strikers the calibre of Mark Viduka, Paul Agostino and John Aloisi also in the picture.

Sterjovski has come a long way in a short time and, judging by his first taste of international football against Scotland, more is on the way.

"It was a big honour to play against Scotland. I must admit I was nervous before the game but I did not expect the other players to be as friendly as they were. It was a wonderful atmosphere," he says. "Last season I used to pinch myself to make sure what was happening to me in football was real. I don't think it could have happened if I was still in Australia." ⊛

GIVE ME MOORE Craig Moore celebrates with Glasgow Rangers teammate Lorenzo Amoruso.

LONG WAY TO THE TOP

Australian soccer players are having a big impact in Europe despite the huge distances and cultural changes they have to overcome

by Sonja Viduka

When Business Review Weekly published a list of Australia's 50 richest sports men and women at the end of 2000, more than one fifth of the athletes on that list were Australian soccer players plying their trade overseas. It seems barely a week goes by without an Australian soccer player making headlines around the world for his achievements on the soccer pitch. Where ten years ago the thought of an Australian soccer player starring in an overseas club would have induced a snigger from many European managers, those same managers are now raving about the abilities of their Aussie imports.

Europe's biggest clubs are taking notice. They hold Australian players in such high regard that they are putting their money where their mouths are, their millions into Australian soccer. Clubs such as Scottish giant Glasgow Rangers, which recently bought into Sydney club Northern Spirit, are forming feeder partnerships with Australian teams to get first access to young local talent.

All are hoping to find another Kewell, Okon, Viduka or Moore and snap them up before their price tags reach the astronomical figures that soccer stars now command.

While the Australian domestic competition has yet to reach its full potential, Australian soccer's individual stars have never shone so brightly. There are currently over 140 Australian soccer players in overseas leagues, many in the best competitions in the world. Australian soccer exports regularly play in the English Premier League, the German Bundesliga, the Dutch first division and the Scottish Premier League. There are also Australian players in the Greek, Belgian, Norwegian, Swedish, Swiss, Croatian, Austrian and Japanese leagues.

Inspired by the success of their predecessors, and lured by the big money contracts and stardom offered by European clubs, Australian soccer players are leaving our shores at younger and younger ages.

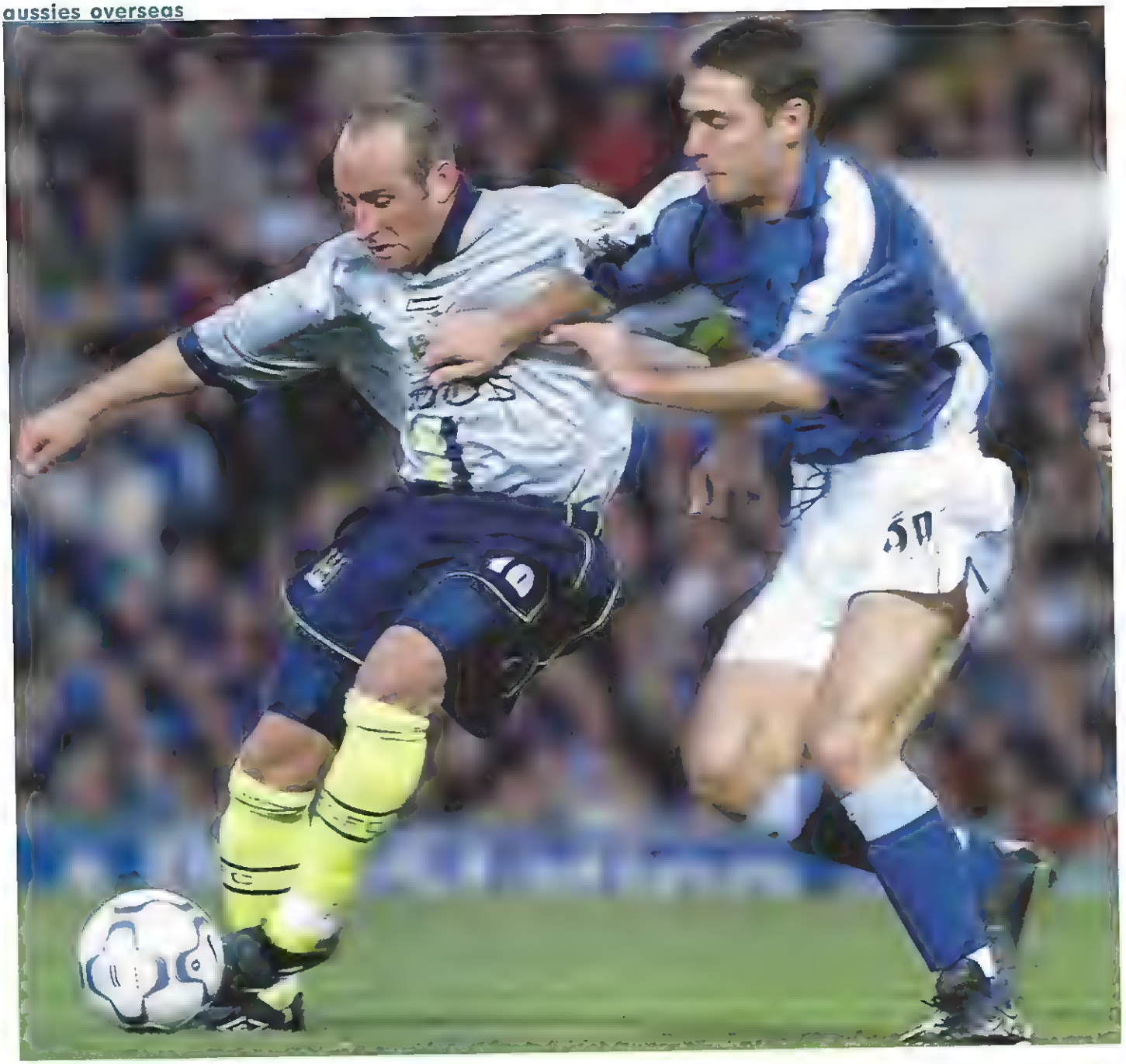
These young Australians face unique challenges. While their foreign teammates may be only a few hours from the comfort of home, Australians must move half a world away, often having to learn a new language and a new culture.

Australians trying to break into European clubs often face the additional obstacle of getting through the red tape to obtain a work permit. They are also confronted by foreign player quotas, which can provoke fierce competition among the players. Finally, they must fit into their new team and impress the manager on the pitch.

At age 26, Australian striker Paul Agostino has already overcome many of the obstacles to become one of the most prolific scorers in the German Bundesliga. Leaving Australia at 16 in 1992 to play for Swiss team Young Boys, Agostino has since played for Yverden in Switzerland, and Bristol City in England before moving to his current club, TSV 1860 Munich, five years ago.

Although he dreamed of playing soccer in Europe since he was a boy, and had a successful season in the National Soccer League for the Adelaide Sharks, Agostino was still unprepared for life as an Australian soccer player in Europe.

"It's a lot more sacrifice than I thought it



FAN FAVOURITE Manchester City's fans voted Danny Tiatto the team's player of the year last season.

was going to be and, speaking from my experience, there are a lot more tough and hard times than good times," he says.

Leaving at such a young age also meant that Agostino was unable to do a lot of things his peers were doing. "You have to give up the going out and messing around with your friends, you've got to stay in and put in the hard work on the training ground. You can't go out drinking as an 18-year-old every night in the clubs - you've got to be disciplined and put in the hard work to make the last cut."

Agostino says that for him the initial period in Europe was the most difficult. "You firstly go to a new team and try to impress and at the same time try to learn their language, learn their culture - you don't know exactly what they're saying, whether they're talking to you or about you, the initial process is very tough but after that it's easier."

There was a period when he was ready to give up. "The most difficult stage was the first three years I had in Switzerland. I was unhappy, the football side of things wasn't going well, I wasn't enjoying my football, I was missing home a lot and I was only 19 years old. I just thought it wasn't all worth it and I came very close to packing it all in, but at the last minute I decided to give England a try and then things started to turn around."

Still, Agostino has no regrets about his decision to pursue professional football. "In the end you can look back and say it's very good - it's tough but it made me tough at the same time, I had to learn how to live on my own, to look after myself, cook and clean for myself. I had to learn a new language - firstly Swiss/German and then German. It's good for you in the end - it makes you a stronger person and a stronger player."

Agostino feels the extra difficulties that Australian soccer players face may be precisely the reason they are so successful and in such demand by overseas clubs.

"The European guys don't have to go through the same thing. They're only a couple of hours away from home. Maybe the attitude and mentality of the Australian players is something they don't have in Europe. The Aussies are very aggressive and the will to win is always there."

Socceroo's coach Frank Farina also believes that the Australian player's unique perspective has contributed to their success in various foreign leagues.

"Australian players have a different attitude from the Europeans because they come from such a different lifestyle and upbringing. They didn't grow up with the same things that a lot of the European players grew up with, such as the big clubs and superstars, so they don't take these things for granted. That's probably why they have such a strong will to succeed and are doing so well," says Farina.

Although much is made of the huge salaries and lavish lifestyles of our top footballers, Farina believes that money is not the main motivation for any of the Australian players. "I think the main thing for the Australians is the challenge and the desire to compete with the best players in the world and play football at the highest level. I don't think the focus is on money. It's the desire to play at the highest level of the competition, playing the Manchester United and the Leeds United and in the Australian national team."

Socceroo and Wolverhampton Wanderer's defender Kevin Muscat left Australia in 1996 with the aim of making it in the English competition. Having dreamed of playing in England since he first started kicking a soccer ball around at age 10, he knew he couldn't knock back the opportunity to play in Europe when it came along.

"It's just the fact that you're going to improve yourself as a player, because the Australian league, without any disrespect, wasn't professional when I left and there is no denying that financially you can do a lot better for yourself and your family as well. It's a world apart in that respect."

Muscat, now 28, is a natural leader and extrovert, and captained the Olyroos at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He says the competitiveness of English football took his mind off any initial feelings of homesickness and allowed him to settle into his new environment quickly. "There are so many games and you're away from home, travelling all the time so that really takes your mind off things and I settled in relatively easily," he says.

He has also been able to cope with the ups and downs and the immense media exposure that is part and parcel of life as a professional footballer in Europe. "You are affected in ways, but it's just a matter of putting things right when they're not. I have always maintained that I only have to satisfy one person and that is the manager. I've played regularly at both clubs I have been to so I can honestly say I have done that and that's good enough for me."

The success of Australian footballers in foreign leagues has done wonders for Australia's national team. The popularity of the world game means that these young men have become some of Australia's most well known ambassadors. As Australia attempts to qualify for its first World Cup in 28 years, one must remember the remarkable odds each individual player has overcome and the sacrifices they have made just to be there. ⊛

HIGH FLYER Paul Agostino has often found the back of the net for TSV 1860 Munich.

AUSTRALIANS PLAYING OVERSEAS

Austria
Frank Bazzano - SW Bregenz
Eddie Bosnar - Sturm Graz

Belgium
Joe Didulica - Germinal Beershot Antwerp
Lorenz Kindtner - Roeselare
Rodrigo Palomino - Francs Borains
Josip Skoko - Racing Genk
Archie Thompson - Lierse

Czech Republic
Mike Sajrynes - SFC Opava

Chile
Marcelo Pena - Everton

Croatia
Kresimir Basic - Hrvatski Dragovoljac
Tony Grdic - Hajduk Split
Anthony Maslic - NK Sibenik

Denmark
Sasho Petrovski - Viborg FF
Richard Plesa - Aarhus GF

England
Daniel Allsopp - Notts County
Con Blatsis - Derby County
Jason van Blerk - Stockport County
Jon Brady - Rushden & Diamonds
Dimitri Brimas - Bournemouth
Stazi Brimas - Bournemouth
Darren Broxton- Southampton
Mark Bosnich - Chelsea
Jacob Burns - Leeds United
Adrian Caceras - Brentford
Shane Cansdell-Sherriff - Leeds United
David Carney - Everton
Simon Colosimo - Manchester City
Sean Cooney - Coventry City
Chris Coyne - Luton Town
Clint Davies - Birmingham City
Gareth Edds - Nottingham Forest
Michael Ferrante - West Ham United
Richard Garcia - West Ham United
Lee Gilman - Norwich City
Mark Graham - Southampton
Scott Guyett - Oxford United
John Filan - Blackburn Rovers
Hayden Foxe - West Ham United
Lee Howells - Cheltenham Town
Danny Invincible - Swindon Town
Richard Johnson - Watford
Brad Jones - Middlesbrough

Harry Kewell - Leeds United
Shaun Kilkelly - Sheffield Wednesday
Steve Laurie - West Ham United
Stan Lazaridis - Birmingham City
Jay Lucas - Southampton
Scott MacDonald - Southampton
Trent McClenahan - West Ham United
Danny Milosevic - Leeds United
Shaun Murphy - Sheffield United
Kevin Muscat - Wolverhampton Wanderers
Lucas Neill - Blackburn Rovers
Paul Okon - Middlesborough
David Oldfield - Peterborough United
Andy Peterson - Portsmouth
Tony Popovic - Crystal Palace
Blake Restell - Doncaster Rovers
Jordan Rhodes - Charlton Athletic
James Rodden - Leyton Orient
Matthew Rosier - Southampton
Mark Schwarzer - Middlesborough
Chris Sharpe - Southampton
Danny Tiatto - Manchester City
Mark Viduka - Leeds United
Russell Waller - Darlington
Luke Wilkshire - Middlesborough

France

Mile Sterjovski - Lille

Germany

Paul Agostino - 1860 Munich
Joey Di Iorio - Werder Bremen
Frank Juric - Bayer Leverkusen
Joshua Kennedy - VFL Wolfsburg
Goran Lozanovski - Alemmanie Aachen
Mark Rudan - Alemmania Aachen
Tony Sekulic - VFR Mannheim
Josip Simunic - Hertha Berlin
David Willey - FC Creglingen
David Zdrilic - SpVgg Unterhaching
Ned Zelic - 1860 Munich

Greece

Ante Covic - POAK Salonika
Bill Damionos - Kallithea
Kosta Salapsidis - Kallithea
John Tambouris - Kalamata
Kyriakos Tohouroglou - PAOK Salonika
Michael Valkanis - Larissa

The Netherlands

Jason Culina - Ajax Amsterdam
Brett Emerton - Feyenoord Rotterdam
Zeljko Kalac - Roda JC Kerkrade
Peter Zois - NAC Breda

Italy

Ross Aloisi - Alzano
Marco Bresciano - Empoli
Vince Grella - Empoli
Adrian Madaschi - Atalanta
Mitrovic - AC Perugia
Nello Notto - Torino Calcio SPA
Nick Rizzo - Ternana
Danie Severino - Piacenza
Jess Vanstrattan - Juventus

Japan

Steve Corica - Sanfreece Hiroshima

Malta

Matthew Galea - Hamrun Spartans FC
Peter Pullicino - Hibernians FC

Netherlands

Mark Tsiorias - FC Utrect

Norway

Chad Gibson - Bodo/Glimt
Ante Juric - Molde
Steve Laybutt - Lyn
Anthony Magnacca - SK Brann
Kasey Wehrman - Moss
Clayton Zane - Lillestrom

Portugal

Michael Curcija - Sporting Braga

Romania

Joshua Maguire - Steaua Bucharest

Scotland

Ben Honeyman - Brechin
Stuart Lovell - Livingston
Simon Miotto - Raith Rovers
Craig Moore - Glasgow Rangers
Mark Robertson - Dundee
Chris Sweeney - Queen's Park
Tony Vidmar - Glasgow Rangers
Stuart Webster - Greenock Morton
Sean Widera - Hibernian

Singapore

Adam Anderson - Woodlands Wellington
Brian Bothwell - Geylang United
Vlado Bozinovski - Clement' Khalsa
Tony Carbone - Marine Castle United
Alex Duric - Geylang United
Josip Kozic - Balestier Central
Hrvoje Matkovic - Home United
Darren Stewart - Balestier Central
Ernie Tapai - Clementi Khalsa
Hamilton Thorp - Tanjong Pagar United
Nebojsa Vukosavljevic - Geylang United
Vlado Zoric - Home United

Spain

John Aloisi - Athletic Osasuna
Hose, Belloserans - Racing Club de Ferrol
Cameron Pino - Seville

Sweden

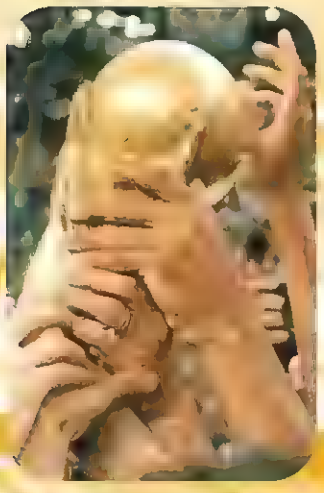
Luke Casserley - AIK Solna
Chay Hews - I F Sylvia

Switzerland

Scott Chipperfield - FC Base.

THE ROAD TO THE WORLD CUP

Every soccer-playing country in the world participates in the World Cup. Each of the six soccer confederations run qualifying rounds to determine their representatives at the World Cup finals, which are held every four years. In 2002, the finals will be held in Japan and Korea.



AFC

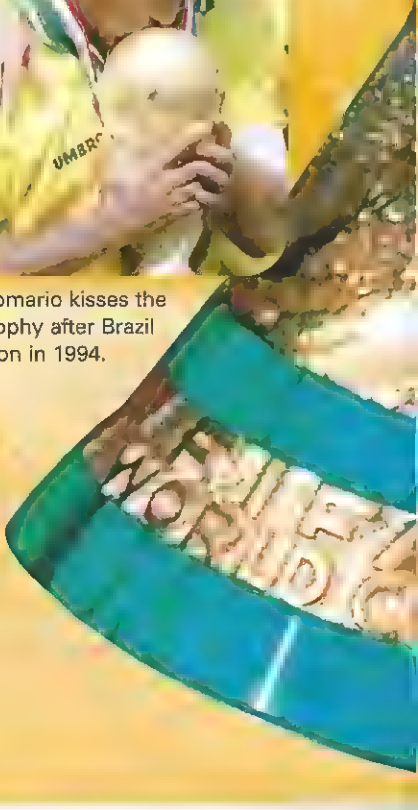
The Asian Football Confederation will provide two or three finalists, plus the two host countries. The top two teams automatically qualify, with the third best playing off against one of the runners up from UEFA's qualifying phase. No team from the AFC has ever won the World Cup. Teams that have already qualified from the AFC for the 2002 World Cup: Korea Republic, Japan, China and Saudi Arabia.

CONCACAF

The Confederation Of North, Central And Caribbean Association Football supplies three finalists. So far, Costa Rica and the United States have qualified. No team from this confederation has emerged as World Cup champion.

Brazilian captain Dunga holds the trophy aloft in '94

Romario kisses the trophy after Brazil won in 1994.



Bobby Moore after England's 1966 win.

CAF

The Confederation Africaine de Football (made up of African nations) provides five teams at the World Cup finals. So far South Africa, Cameroon, Senegal, Tunisia and Nigeria have qualified for the 2002 World Cup Finals. No team from the CAF has ever held up the World Cup trophy.

UEFA

The Union des Associations Europeennes de Football sends 14 or 15 teams to the World Cup finals. After the group qualifying phase, nine group winners directly qualify. Eight group runners-up play off against each other to qualify, while the ninth runner-up plays the third placed AFC nation. So far, France (as the current World Cup champions), Poland, Sweden, Spain, Russia, Portugal, Denmark, Croatia, Italy and England have already qualified.

England, Germany, France and Italy are UEFA nations that have won the World Cup.

Didier Deschamps led France to victory in 1998.

OFC

The Oceania Football Confederation has no direct qualifiers to the World Cup finals. The winner of the qualifying rounds, this year Australia, plays the fifth best CONMEBOL nation for a place in the finals.

Argentina's Diego Maradona in 1986.

CONMEBOL

Four or five teams will emerge from the Confederacion du Sudamericana Futbol qualifying to reach the finals. After a marathon 88 matches, the top four teams directly qualify, while the fifth placed team plays off against the winner of the Oceania region. Argentina is the only team to have already qualified. Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay are the CONMEBOL nations to have won the World Cup.

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